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The Varying Year

Rt. Hon. George W. Russell

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IN MEMORY OF

GEORGE SILSBEE HALE

AND

ELLEN SEVER HALE

THE VARYING YEAR

GEORGE ALLEN & SONS
PUBLISHERS
LONDON
RUSKIN HOUSE

THE VARYING YEAR

BY

THE RIGHT HON.
GEORGE W. E. RUSSELL

"The varying year with blade and sheaf
Clothes and reclothes the happy plains."
—ALFRED TENNYSON.

"All lives lived out of London are mistakes, more or less grievous—but mistakes."—SYDNEY SMITH.

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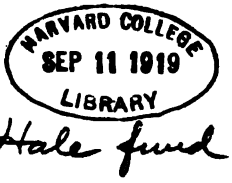

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TO MY BROTHER

HENRY CHARLES RUSSELL

RECTOR OF WOLLATON

IN MEMORY OF OUR OLD HOMES

AT WOBURN

AND WESTMINSTER

NOTE

The two mottoes on the title-page, taken in conjunction, sufficiently indicate the scope of this book. It owes its existence to the suggestion of a friend; and, as regards two chapters, to the kindness of the "Saturday Review."

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I stood on a tower in the wet,
And New Year and Old Year met,
And winds were roaring and blowing;
And I said, "O Years, that meet in tears,
Have ye aught that is worth the knowing?
Science enough and exploring,
Wanderers coming and going,
Matter enough for deploring,
But aught that is worth the knowing?"
Seas at my feet were flowing,
Waves on the shingle pouring,
Old Year roaring and blowing,
And New Year blowing and roaring.

ALFRED TENNYSON.

THE VARYING YEAR

JANUARY

"Out, alas!
You'ld be so lean that blasts of January
Would blow you through and through."
—THE WINTER'S TALE.

ON the 1st of January, 1882, my loved and honoured master, Matthew Arnold, "auspicated," as Burke would say, the New Year with a note of unusual buoyancy. "I think the beginning of a New Year very animating: it is so visible an occasion for breaking off bad habits and carrying into effect good resolutions. I am glad to find that in the past year I have at least accomplished more than usual in the way of reading the books which at the beginning of the year I had put

down to be read. I always do this, and I do not expect to read all I put down; but sometimes I fall much too short of what I proposed, and this year things have been a great deal better. The importance of reading, not slight stuff to get through the time, but the best that has been written, forces itself upon me more and more every year I live; it is living in good company, the best company, and people are generally quite keen enough, or too keen, about doing that, yet they will not do it in the simplest and most innocent manner by reading. However, if I live to be eighty, I shall probably be the only person left in England who reads anything but newspapers and scientific publications."

Those words—"if I live to be eighty"—sound wistfully in the ears of the disciples who followed Matthew Arnold to his resting-place at Laleham on the 19th of April, 1888. He had lived sixty-five years; but, even if he had survived till now, he would not have witnessed the dismal catastrophe which he anticipated. We still are at least as much a

reading people as we were in 1882. That may not be saying a great deal; but at anyrate we are not yet reduced to a diet of journalism and science. We read a good deal of poetry, though not perhaps the best; we read what our forefathers called "Belles Lettres"; and, above all, we read novels. Though bloodless revolutions convulse the literary world, and thrones of criticism topple down, and reckless journalism assails the sanctity of Paternoster Row, and maligned publishers appeal for justice to their country's laws, Fiction goes serenely on its way, undisturbed by all the hubbub of contending factions.

> "For ever and for ever,
> As long as the river flows,
> As long as the heart has passions,
> And as long as life has woes,"

such people as read at all will read novels, even though they read nothing else. It is only too true that much of the fiction which we most thoroughly enjoy is what Matthew Arnold called "slight stuff"; and falls very far below "the best that has been written";

and few indeed are they, even among such as profess to love books, who on New Year's Day lay down a course of reading for the year; and on the New Year's Day next ensuing practise self-examination about resolutions unfulfilled and books unread. Mrs. Wodehouse, when editing her Father's "Note-books," told us that they were official Diaries, in which, amid his engagements as an Inspector of Schools, he entered the passages which most forcibly struck him in his daily reading; and "in the blank pages at the end he made a list of all the books he wished to read during the year. Through those books which he did read he drew a black line."[1] His scheme of reading for 1888 contained exactly one hundred items. In Greek, he laid down, besides a section of the New Testament and the *Didaché* in Sabatier's edition, twelve books of Homer, some Æschylus, some Sophocles, some Plato, some Aristotle, and the Anthology. In Latin, some Virgil, some Horace,

[1] "Matthew Arnold's Note-books," with a preface by the Hon. Mrs. Wodehouse.

some Cicero, the *Pharsalia*, the Rule of St. Bernard, and the *Imitatio*. In Italian, Leopardi, Tasso, and Petrarch. In German, Goethe and Schiller, Heine and Ewald. In French, he had marked twenty-nine books to be read—Bourdaloue and Bossuet rubbing shoulders with Voltaire and George Sand; in English, forty-three, which, by their variety and choiceness, might serve as an Introduction to English Literature, and which, beginning with the Book of Job, end with the Epistle of St. Jude. When this programme of a year's reading was drawn up, he who drew it had only three months to live; and not more than sixteen of the long array are marked as read. Among those sixteen is Ecclesiasticus, and from that neglected book Arnold had chosen a sentence which might well serve as a New Year's Motto—

"From the morning until the evening the time is changed, and all things are soon done before the Eternal."

But the First of January meant more to Matthew Arnold than a renewed acquaintance

with "the best that has been written." His purview covered a wider area. "It is so visible an occasion for breaking off bad habits and carrying into effect good resolutions." In these activities we all can imitate him, even though we can no longer, if ever we could, "read Plato with our feet on the hob," and are forced to rely for the interpretation of Aristotle on his Chief Banker, Mr. Grote. It is idle for philosophers of the Hardheaded School to tell us that the First of January is a date which does not differ in kind and essence from any other day of any other month. Nature is too strong for them. "Among the promptings of what may be called, in the truest sense of the term, Natural Religion, none is more instinctive than that which leads men to observe with peculiar solemnity the entrance upon a new year of life. It is, if nothing else, the making a step in the dark. It is the entrance upon a new epoch in existence, of which the manifold 'changes and chances' prevent our forecasting the issue. True, the line of demarcation is quite arbitrary; yet there are

few, even of the most thoughtless, who can set foot across the line which separates one year from another without feeling in some degree the significance of the act. The 'wild bells,' ringing out 'in the wild sky,' warn even the midnight reveller of the lapse of time; and the new date which we have to write is in itself a silent monitor that we are one stage nearer the end of our journey. It would seem, then, that at least a brief pause and a passing season of thoughtfulness should be to responsible beings a purely spontaneous act, and certainly one of those opportunities which no form of religion could afford to miss. And yet, for a long time, that which may perhaps, without offence, be termed Ecclesiasticism, sternly refused to recognize this occasion. The line was rigidly drawn between the Civil New Year and the Church's New Year. We were told that Advent was the beginning of our Sacred Year, and that then was the time for those serious thoughts and those good resolutions which proverbially accompany them." Quite true; but it was all in vain.

New Year's Eve and New Year's Day retain, for the natural man, a solemnity and an impressiveness which the last day of Trinity and the First Sunday of Advent wholly lack. Men may spend the moment of transition from Old to New in very various ways—dancing under the festooned holly in the panelled halls of country houses;[1] singing Auld Lang Syne, not without the accompaniment of ardent spirits, on the steps of St. Paul's; kneeling as units of crowded congregations at Watchnight Services in Ritualistic Churches or Wesleyan Chapels; or alone, in bitter-sweet reveries by a dying fire in a solitary study. But, spend it how and where they will, the stroke of Midnight on the 31st of December speaks to the heart with a thrill that is all its own. We look before and after. Bright retrospects mingle with grave forebodings. The soul is oppressed by disconsolate misgivings; and

[1] "After a very pleasant shoot there was a ball, and amidst the noise the actual stroke of midnight was unheard, and it was only at one o'clock that I felt launched into the New Year. May it prove at least as fortunate as the last."—J. T. Delane at Trentham, January 1, 1874.

the question, which cannot be answered, refuses to be silenced — "This day twelve months, where shall I be and what shall I be doing?"

These be black Vesper's pageants—and it is time to go to bed.

. . . . . .

We rise on the morning of New Year's Day full of virtuous resolutions. Perhaps, obeying a precept delivered by Dr. Liddon from the pulpit of St. Paul's, we "resolve to do every day something which we naturally dislike, as an act of Love and Worship." It sounds unattainably heroic; but really it need not mean much more than an attempt to get down in the morning in time for Prayers; to pay each bill, as it is delivered, by return of post; never to keep the Press waiting for a corrected proof; and always to vote for one's bitterest enemy when he comes up for Ballot at the Club.

All these resolutions are excellent, and others like unto them might be added at discretion. But they all presuppose another

which is vital and fundamental. As a condition precedent to all virtuous action, we must resolve to live; and he who lives through January performs an exploit worthy of him who, when asked what he had done in the Reign of Terror, replied, *J'ai vécu*. In that last sentence, the reader may detect a constitutional disrelish for the month of January; and I may freely confess that this disrelish, implanted in me by Nature, has been matured by experience into an active and passionate dislike.

The late Sir Henry Thompson, in that famous Guide to Greediness which he entitled "Food and Feeding," calls January a "fruitful month of all good things."[1] I wish I knew what they are. Game is becoming scarce; coals are ruinously dear; flowers cannot be obtained for love — that is hardly to be expected—or for money either, unless one is prepared to pay a good deal to a florist at Torquay. It is nearly as dark as December,

[1] "Fresh French truffles are in perfection in January, to which fruitful month of all good things this dish (*chapon truffé*) might well be relegated."

and much colder. Fogs are at their thickest. Influenza rages. The only cheerful faces one sees belong to doctors; and, except for them and their bedridden patients, London is empty. Every one who has a country house is in it, and those who have not are staying with those who have. For those favoured souls even January has, I believe, its charms, and one of them has described it thus:—

"It was an exquisite January morning in which there was no threat of rain, but a grey sky making the calmest background for the charms of a mild winter scene—the grassy borders of the lane, the hedgerows sprinkled with red berries, and haunted with low twitterings, the purple bareness of the elms, the rich brown of the furrows." For my own part, I should have thought that this description applied better to February than to January; but, anyhow, it has no resemblance to a January in London.

My last quotation was from a work of fiction—and a great one. Now listen to the praise of a frosty January by a writer who

conscientiously described the actual experiences of life.[1]

. "I am sorry to confess that I am one of those beings bereft of thought and feeling who do enjoy a hard frost. There is, indeed, one moment in the twenty-four hours which is at such times one of bitterness and shame—that is the moment preceding the exit from bed into the inclement morning air. With this exception, a hard frost is a real pleasure to me. I like the bright sunshine that generally accompanies it, the silver landscape, and the ringing distinctness of sounds in the frozen air. Skating, too, is a great delight to me (though I am a very indifferent performer), and is only rivalled in my affections by a ride across country on a *very* good horse. . . Still I would rather give up all the pleasures of frost than enjoy them, poisoned, as they are, by the misery of so many of our brothers. But what a monstrous thing it is that, in the richest country in the world, large masses of her population should be condemned annually, by a normal

[1] Edward Denison, M.P.

operation of Nature, to starvation and death." That last and most depressing sentence is extremely opportune at this season of unemployment and distress.

There always is a delightful "Seasonette" before Christmas, when people come up to buy their presents and go to the play; and, when Parliament meets, it will bring the renewal of social activities. But, in this bleak and bitter month, we, whose movements are bounded by the cab-radius, are left to our own depressing reflections on health and weather and increasing age; relieved only by the contemplation of our Christmas bills, and the sanguine dreams of retrenchment which these suggest. The very newspapers fail us at our utmost need, and have nothing more festive to report than "Shocking Railway Disaster," "Fog Fatalities," "Skating Accidents and Loss of Life," and "Increasing Death-Rate in London." And this is what Sir Henry Thompson had the hardihood to call a "fruitful month of all good things"!

And these are not merely the helpless tears of senile decay—

"'Twas ever thus from childhood's hour."

I never can remember a time when January was not an odious month. In boyhood, when one had no Christmas bills, and was not supposed to mind the weather, and certainly had not learnt to dread the influenza, January was made gloomy by the hideous fact that one was soon returning to school for the least attractive "Quarter" of the year. The emotions of a boy whose home was in London have been described by the hand of a master.[1] "His thoughts travelled back to that delightful afternoon on Christmas Eve, when they had all come home riotous through the brilliant streets, laden with purchases from the Baker Street Bazaar, and then had decorated the rooms with such free and careless gaiety. And the Christmas dinner, too! He had sat just where he was sitting now, and he could distinctly recollect now, and with bitter remorse, that

[1] Mr. Anstey Guthrie.

he had not then enjoyed himself as much as he ought to have done. He even remembered an impious opinion of his that the proceedings were 'slow.' Slow! with plenty to eat, and three more weeks of holiday before him; with Boxing Day and the brisk, exhilarating drive to the Crystal Palace immediately following, with all the rest of a season of licence and varied joys to come, which he could hardly trust himself to look back upon now! *Slow?* He must have been mad to think such a thing."

And in a country home the conditions of January were, *mutatis mutandis*, not widely different. The decorations and the presents and the Christmas dinner were the same. A lawn-meet might take the place of the drive to the Crystal Palace; and a young people's party, with attractive presents (not toys) in a brandpie, might give a boy his first taste of social life. But these joys went out with the Old Year, and January came fraught with disappointment and disaster. Measles or chickenpox (which might just as well have waited till

the holidays were over) laid one by the heels. If one's heart was in hunting, and one longed to show off on a new pony, a hard frost set in. "It is generally a frost on New Year's Day; however wet and sloppy the weather may be up to the end of the year, it generally turns over a new leaf on that day. New Year's Day is generally a bright, bitter, sunshiny day, with starry ice, and a most decided anti-hunting feeling about it—light, airy, ringy, anything but cheerful for hunting."

If one preferred skating, and loved, like Wordsworth,

> "Shod with steel,
> To hiss along the polish'd ice, in games
> Confederate,"

a rapid thaw came and converted the "polish'd ice" into slop and slush. And, harmoniously mingled with all these various vexations, there was the haunting consciousness of an unlearnt holiday-task, and the desperate resolve—never by any chance fulfilled—to learn it in the train between Bletchley and Harrow, or Paddington and Eton.

"I remember, I remember, how my childhood fleeted by,
The mirth of its December, and the warmth of its July."

That was all very well; but no poet ever attempted to glorify January. This silence of the Muse is no doubt due, in part, to the fact that January is a difficult word to drag into a line; but the deeper reason is that the month is essentially vile and vicious.

All the sad and sombre events seem to happen in January, and they gain additional sadness and sombreness from the low thermometer and the leaden sky. On the 30th January, 1620, a new Parliament assembled at Westminster; the House of Commons was for the first time divided into the "Court" and "Country" parties; the struggle between the Stuarts and the Commons entered on a new and more resolute phase; and it culminated on the 30th January, 1649. Poor King Charles! I am no devotee of the House of Stuart; but I cannot resist a sympathetic shudder when I think of that "sharp"

morning which made the king ask his valet for a second shirt, lest his enemies should think that his teeth were chattering with fright;[1] and the dismal walk from St. James's to Whitehall, through air made chilly by the impending snow which, before night fell, had covered the "White King's" coffin with its spotless pall.

Thirteen years pass by, and John Evelyn, writing on the 30th January, 1661, describes, with a kind of pious rapture, a performance which, in its beastliness, was worthy of this month.

"This day (O the stupendous and inscrutable judgments of God!) were the carcasses of those arch rebells Cromwell, Bradshaw, the Judge who condemned his Majestie, and Ireton, sonn-in-law to the Usurper, dragged out of their superb tombs in Westminster among the Kings, to Tyburne, and hang'd on the gallows there from 9 in the morning till 6 at

[1] "Let me have a shirt on more than ordinary," said the King, "by reason the season is so sharp as probably may make me shake, which some observers will imagine proceeds from fear. I would have no such Imputation. I fear not Death! Death is not terrible to me. I bless my God I am prepared."—Sir Thomas Herbert's *Memoirs of King Charles I.*

night, and then buried under that fatal and ignominious monument in a deepe pitt; thousands of people who had seene them in all their pride being spectators." Brutal spectators! I hope they died of influenza, or some other seasonable plague.

It was in January, 1684, that, "The weather continuing intolerably severe, streetes of booths were set upon the Thames, and they roasted meate, and had divers shops of wares quite acrosse, as in a towne, and coaches, carts, and horses passed over." But let no one murmur the hoary superstition that a hard winter is good for the general health, for Evelyn expressly records that "the small-pox was very mortal." Truly said Mrs. Hackit in a later age—"They say a green Yule makes a fat churchyard; and so does a white Yule too, for that matter. When the stool's rotten enough, no matter who sits on it."

We traverse the centuries by leaps and bounds, but January never changes its dire character. On the 22nd of January, 1768, Gilbert White wrote from Selborne: "We

have had a very severe frost and deep snow this month. My thermometer was one day fourteen degrees and a half below the freezing-point, within doors." On the 13th January, 1776, Mrs. Osborn of Chicksands, most anxious of mothers, most accurate of chroniclers, writes thus from London to her absent son: "It is an uncommon expression of affection to say I rejoyce at your being at Naples, for England just now is Muscovy; so severe a climate has not been since the year 1740. Intense cold, and snow so deep no communication of roads, but even the post is days beyond the usal time, and the streets in London almost impassable. What must poor wretches suffer who can have neither victuals, cloaths, or work to procure them any, when even those who enjoy the blessing of comforts so hardly endure it?"

Mrs. Osborn's gloomy account is confirmed at every point by Gilbert White:—

"1776, *January 7*.—Snow driving all the day, which was followed by frost, sleet, and some snow, till the 12th, when a prodigious mass overwhelmed all the works of man,

drifting over the tops of gates and filling the hollow lanes.

"On the 14th the writer was obliged to be much abroad; and thinks he never before or since has encountered such rugged Siberian weather. Many of the narrow roads were now filled above the tops of the hedges, through which the snow was driven into the most romantic and grotesque shapes, so striking to the imagination as not to be seen without wonder and pleasure. The poultry dared not to stir out of their roosting-places, for cocks and hens are so dazzled and confounded by the glare of snow that they would soon perish without assistance. The hares also lay sullenly in their seats, and would not move till compelled by hunger, being conscious—poor animals—that the drifts and heaps treacherously betray their footsteps, and prove fatal to numbers of them.

"From the 14th the snow continued to increase, and began to stop the road-wagons and coaches, which could no longer keep on their regular stages; and especially on the western roads, where the fall appears to have been

deeper than in the south. The company at Bath, that wanted to attend the Queen's birthday, were strangely incommoded. Many carriages of persons, who got on their way to town from Bath as far as Marlborough, after strange embarrassments, here met with a *ne plus ultra*. The ladies fretted, and offered large rewards to labourers if they would shovel them a track to London, but the relentless heaps of snow were too bulky to be moved; and so the 18th passed over, leaving the company in very uncomfortable circumstances at the Castle and other inns.

"On the 22nd the author had occasion to go to London through a sort of Laplandic scene, very wild and grotesque indeed. But the metropolis itself exhibited a still more singular appearance than the country; for, being bedded deep in snow, the pavement of the streets could not be touched by the wheels or the horses' feet, so that the carriages ran about without the least noise. Such an exemption from din and clatter was strange, but not pleasant; it seemed to convey an

uncomfortable sense of desolation—*ipsa silentia terrent.*"[1]

One of the "poor wretches" whom Mrs. Osborn commiserated was Mrs. Elizabeth Woodcock, of Impington, near Cambridge, whose portrait lies before me as I write. She had more reason than most of us to complain of January and its weather, for a snowstorm which raged during the last days of January, 1799, obliterated all the landmarks between Cambridge and Impington; and Mrs. Woodcock, returning from market, fell into a snowdrift seven feet deep. "In this state she continued 8 Nights and 8 Days, and was dug out alive, having retained the full possession of her senses all the while she was immured."

But frost and snow are not the only plagues of January. Fire adds its terrors. On the 10th January, 1838, the Royal Exchange was burnt to ashes. A hard frost, of course, was raging, and no water could be procured. "So vivid and extensive was the conflagration that

[1] Exactly the same phenomenon was noticed on the 18th January, 1881. See p. 26.

it could be seen with the greatest distinctness at Windsor. Even the statue of Sir Thomas Gresham, founder of the Royal Exchange, which had escaped the Great Fire of 1666, was totally destroyed." Pretty well for January.

To the terrors of fire, those of tempest may be added. On the 3rd January, 1841, a thunderstorm of unprecedented severity burst over London, destroyed the Parish Church of Spitalfields, and extended to the peaceful hamlet of Streatham.

On the 13th of January, 1867, an agreeable variety was imparted to the incidents of this obnoxious month by the unexpected ravages of a thaw. "A long series of isolated accidents on the ice was crowned this day by one of fearful magnitude, which took place on that part of the ornamental water in the Regent's Park immediately opposite Sussex Terrace. Although the ice there was looked upon by the ice-men as unsafe, being formed chiefly of melted snow, there were, it was thought, about five hundred skaters exercising thereon in the afternoon—some of them ladies—and no less

than two thousand others looking on from the banks. Suddenly, and without any warning, the ice at the sides gave way, and in a few seconds the entire sheet split up into fragments a few yards square. A general rush was made to the banks, which unfortunately broke up the soft ice into still smaller pieces. Score after score of those who had been enjoying themselves on its surface slipped down between the pieces, and appeared to be at once sucked under the ice. At least two hundred were at one time struggling in the water and screaming for help. A few, with great presence of mind, threw themselves flat upon the surface of the broken sheet, and thus not only preserved their own lives but were instrumental in saving others. The ice-men on duty and spectators of all kinds and conditions did their best to drag people to land; but in the wild excitement of the first moment's surprise many went down without a chance of recovery. Men, women, and children were seen clinging to the edges of the broken ice, shouting for the assistance which those who witnessed their sufferings were

powerless to render, and in a brief time sinking with a few faint waves of the hand above the water. A detachment of police were soon on the spot, and rendered great service in preserving order, and permitting systematic effort to be made for recovering bodies. This unexpected and overwhelming calamity threw a feeling of sadness over the entire Metropolis. The number drowned amounted to forty-one."

The unprecedented snowstorm of January 18, 1881, which enriched the English language with the American word "Blizzard," will never be forgotten by those who, whether in town or in country, had to fight their way through it. Here is the voice of a sufferer:—

"We passed Didcot about 6 P.M., came to a standstill at about three miles this side of it, no house near. I thought it best to stay in the train, as a jolly sailor said at the window, 'Make yourself as comfortable as you can till morning.' Soon after the guard said we must wait till we are fetched. I had finished my package before Swindon, so I began to reflect: no dinner, no supper, late breakfast, if any;

how shall I 'keep warm'? Strange reflections came over me—how do people feel when lost in snowdrifts or in shipwrecks? or, lastly, how do they occupy their minds in prison cells under separate confinement?—only there they are warm. About 9 a man came along with biscuits, port wine, and rum, so I took four small biscuits and gave him 6d., I did not like to take more. . . . I walked up and down, or rather across, my cell, for an hour at a time to warm myself, then wrapped as well as I could (how pleasant the fire or another blanket would have been!), and slept a bit till I was cold, then walked again. My light went out . . . about 1 A.M.; then I walked again (then came the biscuit man); I had two biscuits (ate one), and I then settled myself, sitting with legs in a box of cushions, and I think I did not wake till 8, when I saw daylight, and said out loud, 'How delightful!' I am afraid I thought, but 'no tea!' Finished my last biscuit, and waited events. People began to bestir themselves—they had tried at night to move the train in vain. The up line was overhung

with snowdrifts nearly to the top of the telegraph wires; it came down in avalanches and one wire was broken, but at last they managed to bring a train along the down line with two or three carriages from Didcot, into which we were transferred—ladies carried on men's backs. We were shoved back to Didcot. I walked backwards and forwards to the hotel making no fuss, while young snobs were complaining —one wanted a chop and said it was too bad; asked if there were any gentry in the neighbourhood, he must go and ask for something, and so on. One fellow, much wrapped up, made a good bit of swagger; I heard he talked amusingly of all he had seen with the German army, but whenever I saw him, which was four or five times, he was seated at a table steadily eating and drinking. I got half a glass of milk and a bit of bread. My friend, however, had a fancy for a good breakfast. . . . The line had been heard to be clear beyond Reading, and was now said to be clear, so the Limited Mail started again, and we got well to London just in time for me to post my letter."

Of more recent years, plague and pestilence have claimed January as specially their own. It was in January, 1890, that influenza, which, in its virulent form, had been unknown in England since 1847, returned in all its vigour, and returned to stay. A century before, Lady Sarah Lennox had described it with a graphic pen, and the lapse of a hundred years had not modified or mollified its character. "So *general* an illness has never been known here in the memory of man. I have never heard for certain that it was fatal to any one, but it's horrid troublesome, for I, who have had it in the slightest degree, have a violent cold and some fever: but all *billious* people are very bad with it. You must get rid of it by sweating and gentle phisic, and drink wine, for it's of the putrid kind."

Those who can remember January, 1892, and survive the epidemic which killed Prince Eddy and Cardinal Manning, would say that "horrid troublesome" is too mild a phrase, and have "heard for certain" that influenza is fatal.

FEBRUARY

"Late February days; and now, at last,
Might you have thought that winter's woe was past;
So fair the sky was, and so soft the air,
The happy birds were singing everywhere."

—WILLIAM MORRIS.

"LATE"—stress must be laid on that opening epithet, for the earlier days of February scarcely merit such unrestricted eulogy. A taint of January too often hangs about them, and reminds us that what has been may be again. Shakespeare must have been thinking about the beginning of the month when he wrote those chilly lines—

"Why, what's the matter,
That you have such a February face,
So full of frost, of storm and cloudiness?"

Candlemas Day—as all good Christians should know—falls on the 2nd of February;

and, though its name has a delightfully cheerful sound, it is often set in an environment of "frost and storm and cloudiness." Some five and thirty years ago a vivid writer, of the family of Matthew Arnold's friend—"Adolescens Leo"—made a peregrination of the various churches in London which at that time occupied the largest share of public attention, and his experience of Candlemas Day may serve to remind us that February does not always begin benignly. "The morning I chose for my expedition to St. Alban's, Holborn, was the Feast of the Purification—February 2—when the first snow of 1873 fell, and winter virtually commenced. I had ascertained that Father Stanton was to preach at 'Mid-day Mass'; and so, though omnibuses had struck and cabs retired into private life, I struggled along against a biting east wind and blinding snow, eventually reaching Brooke Street, where St. Alban's is situated, just before High Mass began. There was a fair congregation, far larger than one would have expected from the nature of the weather, which was calculated

to act as a decided damper on any æsthetic proclivities one might have had. I scarcely think I should have struggled to St. Alban's save for a special purpose." The service proceeded in its usual course, and Father Stanton preached —as he is preaching still—inimitably well. "He dwelt on the peculiar character of the festival under its double aspect of the Purification of our Blessed Lady, and the Presentation of our Lord in the Temple. It was, he said, like a last look at Christmas, over which was beginning to be cast the dark shadow of the Passion. It was a spectacle dear to every Christian heart—the Mother with the Child in her arms. To-day she is passing, with the foster-father St. Joseph, through the streets of Jerusalem. There are the dark shadows of the houses, and the glare of the Eastern sunshine, and the passers-by going to and fro. How often has she taken the same walk before! Now she comes as a Mother, but spotless as the driven snow (this image from the weather of the moment was cleverly brought in to the illustration of the

theme). The worship of St. Alban's has been too often described to need reiteration. It was bright with colours, odours, flowers, and music. When the great bell of the church boomed out among the snowflakes at the moment of the Consecration, one felt that to those who knelt, or rather prostrated themselves, the central action of the service was a great fact."

So much for Candlemas Day as observed in England in the Nineteenth Century. Let us hark back to Italy in the Twelfth, and listen to St. Bernard on the observances of the day. "We go in procession, two and two, carrying candles in our hands, and in the way we sing, 'Great is the glory of the Lord.' We go two by two in commendation of charity and a social life. We carry lights in our hands, first to signify that our light should shine before men; secondly, this we do in memory of the Wise Virgins (of whom Blessed Mary is the chief) that went to meet their lord with lamps lit and burning. And from this usage, and the many candles set up in the church this

day, it is called *Candelaria*, or Candlemas. Because our works should be done with the holy fire of charity, therefore the candles are lit with holy fire. They that go out first return last, to teach humility, 'in honour preferring one another.' Because God loveth a cheerful giver, therefore we sing in the way. The procession itself is to teach us that we should not stand idle in the way of life, but 'go from strength to strength.'"

Dryasdust will tell us, with perfect truth, that this *rationale* of the rites of Candlemas belongs to what he urbanely calls "the Dark Ages" of European history; and the Abbé Duchesne would no doubt condemn the interpretation as far-fetched and fanciful. But, for all that, St. Bernard's words breathe that humane and joyous spirit in things of religion and the soul which Matthew Arnold had in mind when he said that "Catholicism suggests all the pell-mell of the men and women of Shakespeare's plays." The Reformation, "salubrious but uncomely," robbed popular religion in England of much that had made it beautiful, and

Puritanism tried to complete the work of devastation which the Reformers had left unfinished; but still there were Prophets hidden in the Cave; and Donne and Herrick in prose and verse rendered due honour to "the Day of Lights." What can be prettier than this ditty on the traditional observance of "Candlemasse Eve"?

"Down with the Rosemary and Bayes,
Down with the Mistleto;
Instead of Holly, now up-raise
The greener Box, for show.

The Holly hitherto did sway;
Let Box now domineere
Until the dancing Easter-day,
On Easter's Eve appeare.

Then youthful Box, which now hath grace
Your houses to renew,
Grown old, surrender must his place
Unto the crisped Yew.

When Yew is out, then Birch comes in,
And many Flowers beside;
Both of a fresh and fragrant kinne
To honour Whitsontide.

Green Rushes then, and sweetest Bents,
With cooler Oken boughs,
Come in for comely ornaments,
To readorn the house.

Thus times do shift; each thing his turne do's hold:
New things succeed as former things grow old."

And now we clear three centuries at a bound, and turn from the ecclesiastical to the political sphere.

It was on "Candlemas Day, 1871," that Matthew Arnold wrote the Dedicatory Letter of "Friendship's Garland" to his friend the leader-writer of the *Daily Telegraph*. "We are now on the point of commencing what Arminius, with his fatally carping spirit, called our 'Thyestëan banquet of claptrap' —we are on the eve of the meeting of Parliament." February is pre-eminently a month of dinners, if for no other reason, because it brings Parliament together, and "Parliament-men" are notoriously fond of dining.

As I write there comes surging back on memory the echoes of the time when I, too, was a "Parliament-man" and "drank delight of battle"—and other beverages—"with my peers." A friendly voice—unheard, alas! for many a year—says persuasively in my ear, "Come and dine at eight. Pot luck, you know. Don't dress." The speaker is Sir

Henry Edwards, M.P. for Weymouth from 1867 to 1885. This genial knight (who had amassed a fortune by purveying linseed to the War Office for poultices in the Crimea) lived in the corner house of Charles Street, abutting on the gardens of Lansdowne House; and, applying his whole mind to the subject of dinners, attained to high perfection in the art of giving them. Two benevolent practices of his invention deserve to be recorded. He caused each course to begin at a different point at the table, so that every guest in turn got the first chance at a dish. He dealt out the asparagus like cards—an equal number of pieces to each guest; and if, on the completion of the deal, he saw that any one had got smaller pieces than his neighbour, he used the residue to redress the inequality. Surely such are those actions of the Just which—

"Smell sweet and blossom in the dust."

Thackeray wrote, in a burst of manly candour: "I am a diner-out, and live in

London. I protest, as I look back at the men and dinners I have seen in the last week, my mind is filled with manly respect and pleasure. How good they have been! how admirable the entertainments! how worthy the men!" I hope I do not fall behind Thackeray in the grace of gratitude, and I am thankful to the hand that feeds me. By far the wisest of the Prince Consort's recorded sayings was that "things taste so much better in small houses." In praising dinners, I praise not magnificence, but comfort—and conversation.

Parliamentary "shop" is held by some critics to be dull; and perhaps, to appreciate it, one must have passed through the peculiar phase of life which it illustrates. It begins on the eve of the opening of the Session at a ministerial party.

"Why are you in uniform?"

"Oh, I've come from Asquith's dinner."

"Oh, do tell us about the speech! Is there anything in it?"

"No, only just what one knew already."

From this illuminating commencement, parliamentary conversation flows on during the earlier weeks of the session, touching in turn on A's good speech, B's palpable falling-off, C's chance of office, and the mess that D is making of his work at the Circumlocution Office; until all the mummery and flummery of the Debate on the Address is done, and the House of Commons settles down to business, and the arrival of asparagus and plovers' eggs assures the child of nature that spring has really come.

"It was a mild winter evening; a little fog still hanging about, but vanquished by the cheerful lamps; and the voice of the muffin-bell was just heard at intervals—a genial sound that calls up visions of trim and happy hearths. If we could only so control our lives as to go into the country for the first note of the nightingale, and return to town for the first note of the muffin-bell, existence, it is humbly presumed, might be more enjoyable."

Never, I think, was the peculiar charm of February, as Londoners know it, better described than in the opening lines of the foregoing extract from "Lothair." Lord Beaconsfield knew and loved London as few men have known and loved it. He knew it in its unfrequented parts, and loved it at its unfashionable times. He understood the City, and yet glorified the Suburbs. He appreciated at their proper value "the high Midsummer pomps" of Parliament and Society; yet paused for a while as he passed through London in deserted September; and even sometimes, greatly daring, braved the fogs of January in Whitehall, and the heats of August in the dusty boscage of Kensington Gardens. He had, indeed, a sense for nature and a sense for town, and, as Mr. Andrew Lang would say, he "could read the lessons in both churches."

February is, indeed, one of the most enjoyable of all the months. Part of its charm is climatic. Wordsworth wrote enchanting verses about—

"The first mild day of March,
Each minute sweeter than before,
The Redbreast sings from the tall Larch
That stands beside our door.

There is a blessing in the air,
Which seems a sense of joy to yield
To the bare trees, and mountains bare,
And grass in the green field.

No joyless forms shall regulate
Our living Calendar:
We from to-day, my Friend, will date
The opening of the year."

But, with all possible reverence for so exact an observer of nature, I should think the first mild day of February a more inspiring theme. There is a peculiar softness in the air, which we have not felt since last September, and a sort of faint green dawn upon the russet hedgerows, which prophesies of spring. Shooting is over—that is an immense relief; and the crash of the brutal *battue* no longer mars the "cheerful silence" of the woods. The grass is spongy under foot, and the "soft sou'-wester" salutes our faces lovingly as we canter across the common. We taste with every breath the joy of reaction. Winter is

over; that is enough. We do not look ahead. We

"Pray but to live, and live e'en as we pray,
Nor with to-morrow's clouds o'ercast our hearts to-day."

We all know Sydney Smith's friend and neighbour, Noodle, who, on a delicious day in early spring, reminded him that "we shall pay for this by-and-bye." We know that the east winds of March are colder than charity; that the thermometer is sometimes lower on Midsummer Day than at Christmas; and that the Derby of 1867 was run, not indeed in a snow-storm, but on a snowy course. We know —but we do not care. We are enjoying life for the moment, and that is enough for people who have barely survived the rigours of homicidal January.

Even after that appalling January of 1776, which Mrs. Osborn and Gilbert White described so feelingly, February made speed to assert its beneficent authority. "The Thames was so frozen over, both above and below the bridge, that crowds ran about on the ice. The streets were strangely encumbered with snow,

which crumbled and trod rusty; and, turning grey, resembled bay-salt; what had fallen on the roofs was so perfectly dry that, from first to last, it lay twenty-six days on the houses in the City; a longer time than had been remembered by the oldest housekeepers living. According to all appearances, we might now have expected the continuance of this rigorous weather for weeks to come, since every night increased in severity; but behold, without any apparent cause, on the 1st of February a thaw took place, and some rain followed before night, making good the observation that frosts often go off as it were at once, without any declension of cold. On the 2nd of February the thaw persisted; and on the 3rd swarms of little insects were frisking and sporting in a court-yard at South Lambeth, as if they had felt no frost."

Happy "little insects"! But for us, who have felt the frost and detested it, the dominant fact of February is that winter is over. All the maladies which winter brings with it are on the decline. The fogs—the real "London

Particulars" which Mr. Guppy so patriotically admired—are gone. "A little fog," as Lord Beaconsfield said, may still hang about Hyde Park Corner and the Mall, but it is "vanquished by the cheerful lamps." We no longer lose our way when we go out to dinner, nor are made prisoners in our houses by the dread of bronchial asthma. And, if we wander out as far as Mitcham Common, or Putney Heath, or "Harrow's far-seen Hill," we see and feel and smell—for the nostril has its full share in this delight—the returning spring.

Oliver Wendell Holmes exactly expressed our sensation when he said—"A warm day in February is a dream of April."

It would seem unnatural to omit from a meditation on February all reference to Fox-hunting; and, if I conclude by transcribing the history of the famous "Waterloo Run," I do so partly because it conferred a secular renown on the 2nd of February, and partly because its honours were shared by a friend of mine, who at the time had not reached his eleventh

birthday.[1] I quote from "Eighty Years Reminiscences," by his father, the late Colonel Anstruther-Thompson.

"THE WATERLOO RUN

"1866, *Friday, 2nd February*.—Met at Arthingworth. I rode "Valeria" and "Rainbow"; Dick Roake, "Usurper"; Tom Firr, "Fresco"; Charlie (my son), "Amulet." I was staying at Sir Charles Isham's at Lamport, and hounds called for me as they passed. A very wet morning, but cleared at eleven o'clock; very mild and still; not a very good scent in cover; wind, south-west. Found in Waterloo at five minutes past two by my watch (twenty minutes fast). The fox lay so still, I drew all round the cover, and back to the top before he moved. He lay among a heap of dead sticks; "Graceful" found him. Morris[2] holloaed him away towards the tunnel. I was at the other end of the cover, and before

[1] Colonel Charles Anstruther, D.S.O.

[2] Richard Morris, my second horseman, a capital man with hounds, many years with the Warwickshire, and with me in Bicester, Pytchley, and Atherstone countries.

I got to the hounds they had checked near the road. I took them along the road nearly to the white gate, where they got the line towards Arthingworth. They were ridden off the line in the first field, but swung round through the fence on to it again, over the brook and spinney at Arthingworth, and crossed the rail. The field was full of sheep, and the shepherd told me that the fox had gone into Langborough. I carried them on, and just as I got to the gate he was holloaed away on the other side. I cut down the middle ride and got on the line, crossed the Harborough road, and we ran fast on to Shipley Spinney. Hounds just crossed and went right up the hill towards Clipstone, and then it began in earnest. Dick went round the Tallyho end of the spinney (Tallyho covert lies to the west of Shipley Spinney), and viewed another fox, and blew his horn, which distracted some of the field and put them out of it. Two fields further on there was a stiff stile and footboard, which lots of fellows tumbled over. I had a shy at the bullfinch up hill, high and strong, and it turned "Valeria" over.

I lost a spur, which I put in my pocket, picked up the pieces and set sail, but I lost half a field, which I could not regain. Two fields on another stile, and lots of grief; Robertson[1] and another down, blocked the way. The field then divided into two lots, the right-hand lot well with the hounds — Custance, Tom, Charlie White, Fraser, Topham, and perhaps twenty more; the left-hand lot— myself, Mills, Delacour, Boyd, &c.—about a field and a half behind the hounds. Hounds ran on without a pause past the spinney between Oxendon and Clipstone, leaving Oxendon village to the right, into the Farndon and Oxendon road. I came into the road opposite Mr. Kirkman's house. They checked here, and I lifted them on to a holloa one field off, having to jump a nasty double, with a rail towards me to get at it. "Governess" first spoke to the line, and off we went again, crossed the bottom from Farndon, which Vivian jumped first and fell; I scrambled in and out. Nethercote, White, Fraser, and Topham were

[1] Brother of Captain Robertson, Royal Dragoons.

first at the next fence. Hounds then began to go down the hill towards Lubbenham, one field to the right of the Farndon and Harborough road. I got into the road, and here Dick and Charlie (my boy) joined us. Hounds crossed the road into the big field, at the Harborough corner of which is the Welland river. Charlie had a shy at the rails and tumbled over them. I went further up the field for a broken rail. Dick and I both lay to the left for Lubbenham covert, thinking that was his point, but he crossed the river and rail at the Harborough end. We lifted the railway gate off its hinges, and crossed near the covert — Topham, Mills, Mayou, Charlie, &c. We caught the hounds at the Harborough and Lubbenham road. They then turned their heads towards Bowden Inn, and began to run hard. Grief began to be visible at the next fence, a nasty place up hill; Birch Reynardson had his horse in the ditch, and was exclaiming, "Oh, dear! oh, dear!" Two fields further on my mare began to trot (she had a good dressing with the first fox, having

run an hour up and down the rides in Loatland Wood). I heard Dick whistle behind me and say, "Take my horse, sir; he has ten minutes left." I changed with him, and told him to get "Rainbow" from Morris as soon as he could. "Usurper," his horse, was fresh enough, for he rushed at the first fence (a drop), over-jumped himself, and gave me a regular burster, and knocked five minutes of the ten out of himself. No harm done; scrambled on and caught the hounds at the railway bridge at Bowden Inn. The fox had run the road. "Relish" hit the line through the hedge on the right, and Tom held the rest up to her. The field had cut off the tail hounds, and got "Flasher" and "Graceful" in the middle of them, and were playing at football with them, for which I blessed them. They ran round the back of Bowden Inn, paused for a minute at a plough, and crossed the rail at the first crossing right of the Langton road. "Flasher" first over the rail, and then over the brook, and on as if for Langton Caudle. Frank Langham went at the brook, and his

horse jumped in. Tom Firr, seeing the bottom was good, jumped in and out. Custance jumped it well, just as Tom got out. Mills and I jumped it more to the right, in a watering-place, and got over well; only two others, Langham and Tom, over before us. It caused lots of grief, and many took to the road at Bowden Inn. White and Fraser's horses stand there, and they both got fresh horses. The fox was headed on the top of the next hill and turned along the valley. Here Charlie White came up on a fresh grey horse, and kindly offered to let me have it.

We now began to be a mutual assistance society, and help each other, and pulled down rails and made gaps. Crossed the road between Thorpe Langton and Great Bowden; hounds still carried on steadily. I just saw Langton Caudle, which we passed on our left, and thought it would be the end of the journey, and that I could just hug up to it. Crossed the Thorpe Langton and Welham road, got through the brook at a ford. Going up a hill, "Usurper" dropped into a trot, and Mr. Hay

lent me his horse, a brown thoroughbred. The first gate I came to half closed and touched his side; he plunged and pitched me clean over his head. We here came to a ploughed field and a wheat-field. The field remained on the grass on the top of the hill. I went with the hounds, and had to jump a ditch up hill out of the plough. The horse did not land his hind-legs, and was not strong enough to get up, so I jumped off. At the bottom of the hill a "Pat" holloaed us on: "Just gone when I holloaed." Off again over the grass, turned to the left, passed a brick kiln, crossed the road between Staunton Wyville and Cranoe, and up hill to a spinney. Hay's horse could gallop well, so I got on to the other side, stood still for a minute, and saw hounds come out, "Royston" hunting it single-handed through the sheep; and then "Monarch" spoke on the other side of the hedge. The rest came bundling on, and away we went, "Cherry" Angel[1] here in company. Crossed a lane near Glooston

[1] Mr. Angel of Lubbenham. "Cherry," contraction of Cherubim, his cognomen at Eton.

village, and carried on well through several fields full of sheep. "Hurrah for the Duke of Beaufort!" said I—"Ferryman,"[1] guiding the scent, leading to Glooston Wood. "I always told you so," says Captain Clerk (Tailby had been in it the day before). Through the wood like bells, and away on the other side towards Skeffington. Allan Young holloaed them away. On coming out of the wood I had a shoe off, and Walter de Winton changed horses with me. There is a nasty deep bottom at the end of the field, where Custance got his horse fast; my horse, or rather Walter de Winton's, refused it, and Edgell[2] scrambled in. Just then I heard Dick whistle, and found him on the other side on "Rainbow." I jumped off, got over the rails, and set sail all right again. Some men rabbiting had turned the fox half a field to the left, and they ran clean away from us again. John Chaplin and another were before me, but kept too far to the left. I got along the road to

[1] "Ferryman," by Duke of Beaufort's "Finder."

[2] E. V. Wyatt-Edgell, 17th Lancers. Killed in the Zulu War, 1879.

Goadby with Colonel Mayow, and caught them at the corner of the road, and then went on with them alone to Keythorpe Wood. Here they checked a moment in the wood, or at least did not speak. I got on to the middle ride, and saw "Singer," "Streamer," and "Ferryman" cross, but not on the line; however, they hit it off again, and went away towards Ramshead. I got the rest after them, and had eleven couple on—"Fanny" the last hound out. Dick and Tom both there. Three fields further on the fox tried the earth, where Tailby had run to ground on the previous Tuesday, and dug out. I looked at my watch; one hour and fifty minutes, and, I think, about eighteen miles, and hounds had only once been off the line, when I lifted them at Little Oxendon. Here there was something like two lines, the body of the hounds going down the field towards Ramshead; a few others had a scent on the right-hand side of the hedge. Coventry[1]

[1] Mr. Coventry ("B") was driving into Harborough. He put up his trap, borrowed a horse from Mr. Angel, and joined in the pursuit.

joined us somewhere here, with a pair of trousers on. I heard Tom, a field behind me, holloa, "Yonder he goes!" and, at the same time, Colonel Fraser told me one and a half couple of hounds were two fields on to the right. I thought the fox had gone through Hallaton Thorns; there is a deep bottom and very steep hill here. I lifted the hounds (hoping to catch the leading ones there) to the far side of Hallaton Thorns. When I got half-way up the hill, two gentlemen on foot, who were rabbiting, showed me where the leading hounds were; they had not come into Hallaton, but were pointing for Fallow Closes, along and outside the fence, in at the gate, and then away along the bottom. I only got thirteen couple away from here, "Merryman," "Streamer," "Relish," "Ransom," "Dragon," and "Singer" generally leading, and all working well.

"Frantic," though she had not been out for weeks, was there. We passed Mr. Studd's house, and they ran away from us again down to Slawston covert. They just came out of

the cover as we got there. The field was full of sheep, and they got the line at the cross roads. While we were on the road some men on the hill viewed the fox going along the hollow behind us, only one field off. We cut along the road, and got on the line directly, ran hard down the meadows to the Welland, near the angle of the river at Welham; turned to the left along the bank of the river, as far as the road which goes to Medbourne station, there turned to the left up to the windmill, and got on to ploughed land. Here Captain Clerk turned up. The fox had been coursed by a sheep-dog, and repeatedly turned. This caused a long check (perhaps twenty minutes). A man told me he had gone slantways across a large wheat-field (which was wrong), and after holding the hounds all round it, I got the line straight on again in the direction we had formerly been going, but with a failing scent. The hounds crossed the line without acknowledging it; "Relish" stopped back alone, and made a drive down the furrow without speaking to it. I put the rest on to

her, and in the next field they began to hunt it again, but they could not go the same pace as before. They crossed the road between Medbourne and Hallaton, and ran up the side of the brook to the road which goes to Blaston, "Graceful" being the last hound to hit off the line; she had also been the first one to speak to it in the morning. It was then getting dark and I was afraid we might lose the hounds, so I stopped them at 5.30, having run three hours and forty-five minutes.

There was a holloa about two fields on at the time. Mr. Piercy, the clergyman at Slawston, had come out on foot when he heard the hounds. He took us to his house and refreshed us, gave the horses gruel, and treated us hospitably, and most kindly offered me a hack if I wished to leave my horse, but he was not tired, and carried me home quite cheerfully. He carried me more than two hours, and never made a mistake—a pretty good trial for a five-year-old. I had gone on for an hour and forty-five minutes without a whipper-in, or having the hounds turned to me once.

Captain Clerk, who was the only man who went through on one horse, helped me through Market Harborough; all the rest of the way we jogged side by side, and the hounds trotted along with their sterns up. It was a fine, mild, quiet night. I stopped every three or four miles, and called them; they all came round me, wagging their tails, and trotted on again. We got to the kennels, eighteen or nineteen miles, about ten o'clock.

At Lamport I met all the party starting for the Harborough ball. My wife returned, and waited while I went to Brixworth with the hounds, got a hack and galloped back to Lamport. I met Dick with "Usurper," just as I was coming out of Brixworth. I sat down to dinner at ten minutes to eleven o'clock, got to the Harborough ball at 12.30, and remained two hours. I was very little tired, and was at Ashby St. Ledgers by twelve o'clock the next day.

After I changed horses with Dick[1] at

[1] R. Roake had been second horseman with Mr. Tailby, and was thoroughly well acquainted with the country.

Glooston, he came on with Mr. Hay's horse to the top of Hallaton Thorns, but finding he could not go the pace to be of any assistance, he came quietly on to Fallow Closes, picked up "Tyrant" (who was short of work, having a toe-nail off) and "Bluecap," and went to Mr. Hay's at Great Bowden. He there got his own horse, who had eaten a feed of corn, went into Harborough to get a shoe put on, and jogged on home. Charlie went as far as Langton, overtook Morris at Bowden Inn, and went home with him. Tom's horse, "Fresco," carried him capitally up to Keythorpe, and there he stopped trying to get up to me when he viewed the fox. He came on as far as Slawston, and then went on to Bowden Inn, where his horse remained all night. John Pye, my groom, came on the carriage to Harborough when we went to the ball, and brought him home next morning. Tom Firr came home on the box of the carriage after the ball. Of the hounds left out, "Bowman," "Fanny," "Governess," and "Glory" came home next day; "Monarch"

came in on Monday. I never could see the fox or get any advantage on him, and I don't think I lost a chance. At Keythorpe we may have changed, for Tom saw a fox besides that which the hounds were on. Tailby had been in Glooston Wood the day before. There was no check or perceptible change of scent.

This was the best run I ever saw, and over the finest country and longest distances, straight. There was one ploughed field between Waterloo and Kelmarsh; the second was next the railway behind Bowden Inn. There was a wheat-field and a ploughed field together near Cranoe, and I don't think the hounds were ever off grass, with these exceptions, up to the earth at Keythorpe, one hour and fifty minutes. The hounds worked well, chasing and carrying a good head up to Bowden Inn, hunting steadily through sheep and all difficulties; they were very fit to go, and not an ounce too much flesh. They did a wonderful day's work, having run their first fox an hour and five minutes before they began with this one."

MARCH

"Those eyes
Darker than darkest pansies, and that hair
More dark than ash-buds in the front of March."
—ALFRED TENNYSON.

WHEN Miss Pole and Miss Matty Jenkyns went to spend the day with Mr. Holbrook, they took with them their young friend Mary Smith. When dinner was over, Mary went for a walk in the garden with Mr. Holbrook (who was an eccentric gentleman with literary tastes), and was startled by the abruptness of his conversation.

"He turned sharp round. 'Now, what colour are ash-buds in March?'

"Is the man going mad? thought I. He is very like Don Quixote.

"'What colour are they, I say?' repeated he vehemently.

"'I am sure I don't know, sir,' said I, with the meekness of ignorance.

"'I knew you didn't. No more did I—an old fool that I am!—till this young man comes and tells me. Black as ash-buds in March. And I've lived all my life in the country; more shame for me not to know. Black! they are jet-black, madam.' And he went off again, swinging along to the music of some rhyme he had got hold of.

"We came upon an old cedar tree, which stood at one end of the house:—

"'The cedar spreads his dark green layers of shade.'

"'Capital term — "layers!" Wonderful man!'

"I did not know whether he was speaking to me or not; but I put in an assenting 'Wonderful,' although I knew nothing about it; just because I was tired of being forgotten, and of being consequently silent."

The "young man," whose first book of poems had just been published when Mr. Holbrook entertained the ladies from

Cranford, was, from first to last, particularly alive to the special qualities of the season,

"When through wild March the throstle calls."

He made his May-Queen dream of it—

"All in the wild March-morning I heard the angels call;
It was when the moon was setting, and the dark was over all;"

and, forty years later, the burden of the song was just the same—

"Here, in this roaring moon of daffodil
And crocus, we put forth and brave the blast."

Even Wordsworth, hardy and weather-beaten peasant as he was, disliked the "blast" which accompanies the daffodils and the crocus, and felt the luxury of a "sunny bank" where one can—

"Sink in safe shelter from the winds of March."

When, in daring disregard of all prognostics, the 10th of this boisterous month was fixed for the wedding of our present King and Queen, one of the Canons of Windsor[1] gave a happy turn to the selected date, and preached from the 21st and 22nd

[1] Lord Wriothesley Russell (1804–1886).

verses of chapter xxxvii. of Job—"And now men see not the bright light which is in the clouds; but the wind passeth, and cleanseth them. Fair weather cometh out of the north"—and the "Sea-King's Daughter" from Denmark brought it in her train.

March is a month which is pleasanter in the country than in London. That "Peck of March dust," which is proverbially "worth a King's ransom," is apt in London to be so impregnated with insalubrious particles as to be worth nothing at all except a doctor's bill; and the "blast" comes round the corners with the edge of a razor and the force of a tornado. But in the country there are neither particles nor corners. Where one—

> "Stands four-square to every wind that blows,"

there can be no draughts; and

> "When the wreath of March has blossomed,
> Crocus, anemone, violet,"

the breeze bears with it, not fragments and odours of wood-pavement and germs of

infectious disease, but the wholesome smells of the newly-turned furrow, and "the life-renewing odours of earth renascent." Gardens are gay with—

> "Daffodils,
> That come before the swallow dares, and take
> The wings of March with beauty."

Unless the season is unusually advanced, the "stinking violets," as *Punch's* Huntsman called them, have not killed the scent, and if, like Mr. Jorrocks, we cultivate the "Sport of Kings," we have another month of bliss in store.

Listen to a description by one who was himself a foxhunter, and a keen one. "A silent, dim, distanceless, steaming, rotting, day in March. The last brown oak-leaf which had stood out the winter's frost spun and quivered plump down, and then lay—as if ashamed to have broken for a moment the ghastly stillness. The spiders, having been weather-witched the night before, had unanimously agreed to cover every brake and briar with gossamer-cradles, and never a fly to be caught in them. The steam crawled out of the dank turf, and reeked off the flanks and nostrils of

the quivering horses, and clung with clammy paws to frosted hats and dripping boughs. There sate Lancelot by the cover-side, his knees aching with cold and wet, thanking his stars that he was not one of the whippers-in, who were lashing about in the dripping cover, laying up for themselves, in catering for the amusement of their betters, a probable old age of bedridden torture in the form of rheumatic gout."

Or, perhaps, we do not care for the Sports of the Barbarians, as Matthew Arnold would have said; and, in that case, the mild and lengthening days of later March, which, having come in like a lion, is going out like a lamb, have a peculiar charm in English woodlands. "The air was soft and moist after a recent shower. The south-west wind stirred the pulses. Earth was once more tumid, about to bring forth. Already the hedges were green under the brown; bulbs were pushing delicate spears through the sweet-smelling soil; the buds upon a clump of fine beeches had begun to open. In this solitude, alone with teeming

nature, . . . there came to him, as there had come to the quicker imagination of his friend, the overpowering mystery of Spring, the sense of inevitable change, the impossibility of arresting it. At the moment, all things seemed unsubstantial. Even the familiar spire, powdered with gold by the slanting rays of the sun, appeared thinly transparent against the rosy mists behind it. The Hill, the solid Hill, rose out of the valley, a lavender-coloured shade upon the horizon."[1]

But we cannot all spend March in the country, even though we may wish to do so. Politics, professional duties, the clamours of a family who insist on having a little season before Easter, and a dozen other calls summon us to London. On the 2nd of March, 1867, Matthew Arnold wrote thus to his mother—"The east wind blows, and the fires and arm-chairs of the Athenæum are very comfortable. I have had no cold as yet since October, and, as long as I am in active

[1] "The Hill," by H. A. Vachell.

work, and my spirits are good, I do not much expect to catch one. It is when one is depressed that all these things lay hold of one easiest."

Quite true; but some of us find that our "spirits" are not "good" in March, and that the weather depresses us to a point at which not only colds but a dozen worse plagues lay hold of us quite easily, and stick to us pertinaciously. My dear and honoured master, Dr. Liddon, felt this when, on the 16th of March, 1870, he wrote thus to a friend—"The cold has been very great during the last two or three days, and the green things which had begun to grow look terribly pinched—like Christians after a 'Judgment' of the Privy Council." And Matthew Arnold himself wrote on Lady Day, 1864—"What an East wind this is! and how it exasperates everything that is furious, vicious, and contrary in one!"

But though too often inclement and insalubrious, March is, in London, essentially a hospitable month; and indeed I have observed, in a long career of dining, that dinners become

at once more numerous and more jovial as we advance further and further into Lent. "In my young days there was no Lent," said an Illustrious Personage defending some courtly festival during the Forty Days' Fast; but modern Society, though indifferent to Lenten claims, has decency enough to recognize Holy Week, and for the six days next before Easter mankind, even if it does not fast, dines at its own expense.

Meanwhile what we omit in the way of abstinence we endeavour to compound for by excess of church-going. Lent Services and Lent Sermons, seasonable Lectures and penitential music abound in all the places of fashionable devotion. Every church in May Fair and Belgravia, South Kensington and Paddington, issues its Lenten Bill of Fare, and strives to outvie its neighbours in names that "draw," and topics which may arrest the attention of the casual passer-by.

The devotional observance of Lent is indeed universal. No ecclesiastical zone is outside its sphere of influence. High, Low, and Broad—to

use the old fashionable nomenclature—Ritualist and Modernist—Catholic and Evangelical—put their shoulder to the wheel and make the Forty Days a season of vigorous and often successful effort. It is probably for this very reason that Lenten Sermons no longer attract attention, nor furnish topics for conversation at Sunday luncheons. They are taken as matters of course. They instruct, they edify, they do in fact that for which sermons were ordained; but they no longer excite. Forty years ago a notable course of Lenten Sermons was a nine days' wonder, and something more. Dr. Pusey, a kind of academical John the Baptist, emerged from the seclusion of Christ Church to denounce the seven last woes on Dives and his luxury. An impassioned curate from the Black Country, who was called George Body, stirred uncomfortable emotions in the decorous congregation of All Saints', Margaret Street. Wilkinson was shaking the dry bones of Belgravia, and making ready for his unique triumph of spoiling the London Season. Liddon, young, beautiful, ascetic; with his olive skin and

cropped black hair, and chiselled features, and vibrating utterance, was investing the Sundays of March, at St. James's, Piccadilly, with a degree and kind of interest which drowned the Opera, and threw the House of Commons into the shade.

"'As dull as a sermon;' no proverb is more trite. 'The age of the pulpit has gone by;' no idea is more readily taken for granted by cultivated men. On these commonplaces of Society, however, a strange commentary has been furnished by the afternoon Lenten Services at St. James's. For several Sundays the space in front of the church has, more than half-an-hour before the beginning of the service, been thronged by a fashionable concourse, which has eagerly watched for the opening of the door, and has rushed into the lobby with the unceremonious vigour of a plebeian mob at the pit-entrance of a theatre on 'a first night.' Elegantly dressed ladies have endangered shawls, bonnets, and tempers in the crush; fashionably dressed men have not scrupled to use their physical strength to get a good

place; and, five minutes after the opening of the doors, every free seat has been filled. By three o'clock not a single seat has been unoccupied, and throughout the services the passages have been crammed. Cabinet-ministers, ex-ministers, members of the nobility, a throng of fashionable women, and a crowd of men who seem to have strayed out of their element in going to afternoon prayers, have filled the church to overflowing. Still more striking has been the sight during the Sermon. Sometimes for an hour and forty minutes, and never for less than an hour and a quarter, has the preacher drawn out the thread of his discourse. The Sermons have dealt with the profoundest questions which can engage the human mind. In what form the religious instinct has revealed itself in successive ages, and among different peoples; what has been done to satisfy that instinct by Pantheism on the one hand, or by Positivism on the other; what lines of connection exist between the speculation of modern Germany and that of ancient Greece; how evil has intertwined itself into the works of a

sinless Creator; and with what hope of answer the prayer of a finite being can be addressed to an infinite Creator—such are the subjects on which Canon Liddon has been discoursing to the great West-end crowd.

"And, if the themes have seemed unlikely to be popular, still less popular might appear the method of treatment. No appeals have been made to excited feelings, and the vigorous flow of rhetoric has been disturbed by no bursts of vague eloquence. Every sermon has manifestly been written with elaborate care, and the successive links of the reasoning have been so closely knit that to keep them all in view has needed the closest attention even of trained minds. No insult is offered to the intellect of the audience by the doubt whether many of the hearers fully comprehended the theistic argument which Mr. Liddon drew from the supremacy of the Moral Law. Nor is the metaphysical learning of the West-end ladies disparaged by the suspicion that few possessed such knowledge as he took for granted when he reviewed the efforts of Hume and Mill to

resolve cause and effect into a mere antecedent, bound together by no tie of force, but merely by the link of position in time or space. Yet, while the preacher was minutely detailing and elaborately criticising the arguments of Fichte or Comte, the large audience has preserved such silence, and displayed such fixity of attention, as to recall the triumphs of the Opera rather than of the Pulpit. Whereas an ordinary preacher finds it difficult to gain a hearing even for a quarter of an hour, Mr. Liddon has riveted the attention of his audience for more than an hour and a half. That the eagerness to hear great preaching is still a passion, and that the pulpit might still be a great power, are facts amply attested by the series of Lenten Services which are to be finished next Sunday.[1]

"And what is the secret of the preacher's success? In the first place, he has something to say. Instead of claptrap sentiment or vague declamation, he gives the results of long study and careful thought. Even when most widely

[1] Palm Sunday, 1870.

disagreeing with Mr. Liddon's conclusions, the student of philosophy, theology, or Church history sees that each sermon sums up the reading and the thought of years. Such general erudition could be matched by that of few divines in a Church which, even in the era of Georgian mediocrity, never lost the reputation for learning achieved by the Cudworths and the Hookers. So wide and so accurate an acquaintance with the speculations of Germany and France could be matched only by the few English divines who, like Dean Mansel, have made ontology and psychology their special province. Just as Mr. Liddon's Bampton Lectures on 'The Divinity of our Lord' were at least as remarkable for their display of minute familiarity with the destructive criticism of Strauss and Baur as for the acuteness of the reasoning or the force of the rhetoric, so the Lenten Sermons are not least distinguished by a wide and varied erudition. But erudition, when it stands alone, is a poor endowment for a preacher, and Mr. Liddon is a reasoner as well as a scholar. In these days of loosely-

reasoned discourses, when preachers do not even dream that a defiance of accurate thinking is a great sin, it is a positive wonder to see Mr. Liddon's attempt to link the deliverances of Dogmatic Theology with the primary instincts of our nature by a hard chain of logical inference. We do not say that the cogency of the argument would win a tribute of admiration from his philosophical opponents. His attempt to overthrow the Pyrrhonism of Hume will not, we fear, strike terror into the small but enthusiastic band of Comtists; his assault on the utilitarian theory of ethics will not give Mr. Mill reason for a change of front; nor, we suspect, will his treatment of that mystery of mysteries, the origin of evil, give more universal satisfaction than the vehement rhetoric which rang through the tents of the Arabs untold centuries ago.

"Besides having something to say, Mr. Liddon knows how to say it. His rhetoric is full of colour and vigour and tempered passion. In the power of clear, vivid, and strong statement, he has no rival among English preachers.

And the Sermon on the efficacy of such prayer as a finite being might address to an Infinite Being displayed a fervour of rhetoric which could scarcely be reined in even by the curb of a fastidious culture, or stayed by the load of learning and thought. As for an hour and forty minutes Mr. Liddon discussed the question whether the idea that prayer can be heard is compatible with the doctrine that the world is governed in accordance with inflexible laws, he set forth the result of such reading and thought as would equip an ordinary preacher for a year of pulpit eloquence. Indeed, the defect of the Sermons is that they are better fitted for the eye than the ear. Only when they are published in a collected form, and read as a review of the relations borne by the current forms of philosophical thought to religious faith, will their real weight and power be fully seen.

"And what is the moral of the brilliant success which is attending these remarkable lectures? It is a moral which, as old as human thought itself, has been denied by age after age, only to be reasserted with renewed

vehemence and vigour. It is the moral that, of all subjects, those which concern the everlasting destinies of man excite the profoundest interest, and that, when discussed with earnestness and sterling intellectual power, such themes exercise a resistless fascination. Again and again does Scepticism seem the omnipotent creed, and the very idea of religious belief to have vanished from educated Society: but the chill of unbelief passes away, and the fever of faith comes back again. Voltaire and the Encyclopædists fancied that from the belief of cultivated Europe they had at last banished every tenet except naked Deism, and had reduced Christianity to a bugbear of the priests. Hume imagined that he had finally demonstrated the futility of reasoning with respect to the invisible world. And, stealing weapons from the armoury of the great Scottish sceptic, Comte waged war against all forms of the Supernatural, on the ground that we can reason accurately only from the data furnished by sense, and that, when we cannot reason correctly, it is a breach of

morality to reason at all. Voltaire, Hume, and Comte have taught that it is a culpable waste of time to perplex ourselves with such insoluble problems as whether we can determine our own fate in the infinite Hereafter, and whether the Omnipotent Ruler of the universe listens to the prayers of His creatures. And yet these questions are as eagerly discussed to-day as they were five thousand years ago.

"To any fresh or earnest word on these most solemn and mysterious of themes, men listen with some measure of the eagerness which a fond imagination ascribes to the Ages of Faith. Generation after generation feels those questions start up with the greenness of a recurring spring. Dynasties come and go, empires rise and fall, literatures vanish from the memory of man, forms of polity wax old and perish, and the ancient homes of great peoples survive as the sepulchres of the dead; but the broodings of the soul on the dim Hereafter never fade or die. With immortal vigour they reveal themselves in each generation, and

baffle the efforts of logic or sarcasm to numb them into death. It is these undying problems that Mr. Liddon has been passing under review, with the help of a rare erudition and a vigorous dialectic; it is those yearnings of the soul that have found expression in the solemn passion of his rhetoric; and hence, despite his constant recourse to the profundity of German analysis, a brilliant and overflowing audience has flocked to hear his lofty discourse."

That was finely said, and it is as true as it is fine.

Non omnia grandior ætas,
Quæ fugiamus habet;

and it is worth the accumulated rigours of many an English March, to have heard Liddon in his prime.

The fact that, by the end of February, Parliament has generally done with the frivolities of the Debate on the Address, and is settling down to its real business, has made March rather specially a month of oratory. It was on the 1st of March, 1869, that Gladstone

introduced, in one of his very greatest speeches, the Bill for the Disestablishment of the Irish Church. "The speech was regarded as Gladstone's highest example of lucid and succinct unfolding of complicated matter. Disraeli said there was not a single word wasted." So skilfully were the facts marshalled, that every single hearer believed himself thoroughly to comprehend the eternal principles of the commutation of Tithe-Rentcharge, and the difference in the justice due to a transitory and a permanent Curate. The peroration was memorable. "We know the controversy is near its end; and, for my part, I may say I am deeply convinced that, when the day of final consummation shall send forth the words that give the force of law to this work of peace and justice, those words will be echoed from every shore where the names of Ireland and Great Britain are known, and the answer will come back in the approving verdict of civilized mankind."

But, fine as this peroration was, it hardly touched the height which, on the 19th of

March, John Bright reached in his defence of the proposal to apply the funds of the Disestablished Church to the relief of material misery. "Don't you think that such charitable dealing will be better than continuing to maintain by those vast funds three times the number of clergymen that can be of the slightest use to the Church with which they are connected? We can do little, it is true. We cannot re-illumine the extinguished lamp of reason; we cannot make the deaf to hear; we cannot make the dumb to speak; it is not given to us

> "From the thick film to purge the visual ray,
> And on the sightless eyeball pour the day."

But at least we can lessen the load of affliction, and we can make life more tolerable to vast numbers of the suffering. . . . I dare claim for this Bill the support of all good and thoughtful people, and I cannot doubt that it will be accompanied by the blessing of the Supreme in its beneficent results; for I believe it to be founded on those principles of justice

and of mercy which are the glorious attributes of His eternal reign."

I cannot conclude my meditations on fickle and tempestuous March without a touch of personal reminiscence. It was a violent, gusty, dusty, afternoon—March 24, 1878—when a sudden blast of north-east wind almost blew me off my legs as I rounded the corner of Berkeley Street into Piccadilly. Before long we knew that, just at that moment, the naval training-ship *Eurydice* had gone down off Dunnose, with three hundred men and boys on board. It was an event, in its sudden and striking horror, not soon to be forgotten; and it was introduced by Liddon, with characteristic skill, into his Easter Sermon at St. Paul's Cathedral. "Let us suppose that it were consistent with the present Will of God that any of those brave men who sank beneath the waves in the *Eurydice*, could, instead of waiting for the General Resurrection, rise now from their watery shrouds; that they could enter the homes which were awaiting their

return, and which are now plunged in sorrow; that they could speak to a wife, to a mother, to a sister, some words of reassurance and peace. What would be the measure of the joy of such a meeting? It would be exactly proportioned to the anguish which followed the first announcement that the vessel had been lost; an anguish which has been deepening ever since. It would be an exulting rebound of feeling to which nothing in ordinary life is at all parallel. Yet it would be only a distant likeness of the joy which the Apostles experienced on Easter Day."

APRIL

"Oh, to be in England now that April's there,
And whoever wakes in England sees, some morning, unaware,
That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf."

—ROBERT BROWNING.

THIS is perhaps the most popular quotation in the English language. No book of "Selections from the Poets" —no "Golden Chaplet of English Verse"— would be complete without it. And the popularity of the quotation bears witness to the affection in which the month is held. We all love April. It brings with it the joy of a great reaction.

"The bleak wind of March
Made us tremble and shiver"—

Somehow, "liver" seems the inevitable rhyme, and, were we so heartless as to parody "The Bridge of Sighs," we should substitute it for

"river." But in plain prose it may suffice to say that March, even if it stopped short of slaying us by bronchitis or pneumonia, made us bilious and ill at ease. We went to dinners without appetite and to plays without zest. We grumbled and shuddered and complained, and made ourselves the bane of our domestic circle; and, when reproached with bearishness, absolved ourselves with the easy formula that no one could feel pleasant during the "Blackthorn Winter." But now all this is changed. The wind has got round to the south-west, and the sap of life flows more freely in our veins. Shakespeare felt the change when he wrote of "spongy April," and "youthful April, with all his showers." Milton knew the feeling, and wrote of Spring as the time

> "When the fresh blood grows lively, and returns
> Brisk as the April buds in primrose-season."

The biliary ducts have righted themselves, and the air, as soft as butter, soothes our bronchial tubes, and withal our temper. Volleying showers of warm rain encourage the growing

greenness; the sunshine, though fitful, shows gallantly against a blue sky, and the clouds disperse almost as soon as they have gathered. Within and without, above and below, and all around one, is that delicious sense of

"Hope, and a renovation without end,"

which is the special boon of April.

"I might mention all the divine charms of a bright spring day, but if you had never in your life utterly forgotten yourself in straining your eyes after the mounting lark, or in wandering through the still lanes when the fresh-opened blossoms fill them with a sacred, silent beauty, like that of fretted aisles, where would be the use of my descriptive catalogue?" That question of George Eliot, even if it stood alone, would show that she knew what she was writing about.

"There is a rapturous movement, a green growing,
Among the hills and valleys once again,
And silent rivers of delight are flowing
Into the hearts of men.

There is a purple weaving on the heather,
Night drops down starry gold upon the furze,
Wild rivers and wild birds sing songs together,
Dead Nature breathes and stirs."

Those beautiful verses were written in a mild climate and a forward April. Poor old Wordsworth, for his sins (if he had any, which I doubt[1]), dwelt in a northern region where the Spring wore quite a different aspect.

> "In changeful April, when, as he is wont,
> Winter has reassumed a short-lived sway,
> And whitened all the surface of the fields."

Wordsworth must sometimes have forgotten that March was over. It is a dismal picture. Let us turn to one more cheerful, drawn not in Cumberland but in Lincolnshire. Even in Lincolnshire—

> "April nights begin to blow,"

and

> "April's crescent glimmers cold;"

but there are more genial experiences close at hand:—

> "But, Alice, what an hour was that,
> When often roving in the woods
> ('Twas April then), I came and sat
> Below the chestnuts, when their buds
> Were glistening to the breezy blue;
> And on the slope, a thoughtless fool,
> I cast me down, nor thought of you,
> But angled in the higher pool."

[1] "Wordsworth's standard of intoxication was miserably low." —Sir Francis Doyle.

From Lincolnshire, let us cross England and make for Shropshire.

"The crystal purity of a perfect evening at the end of April was settling down over the beautiful valley which lies between Shrewsbury and Ludlow. On the one hand, the Longmynd rolled its great sheets of grouse-moor and scarps of rock, up, fold beyond fold; while, on the other, the sharp peak of Caradoc took the evening, and smiled upon his distant brother, the towering Plinlimmon; while Plinlimmon, in the west, with silver, infant Severn streaming down his bosom, watched the sinking sun after Caradoc and Longmynd had lost it; and, when it sank, blazed out from his summit a signal to his brother-watchers, and, wrapping himself in purple robes, slept in majestic peace."

That is a beautiful piece of landscape-painting, and absolutely true to life. There was a time when I knew the district well, and some of the brightest hours of my boyhood were spent on the Longmynd and its neighbouring heights.

The view which Henry Kingsley thus described was, I suppose, the same as that which James Thomson—a poet who, in spite of his absurdities and "leagues of lumbering movement," had a true sense for nature—descried from the upper grounds of Hagley Park. According to Gilbert White—and no authority can be higher—Thomson was "a nice observer of natural occurrences," but he begins his "Seasons" with this sanguine invocation:—

> "Come, gentle Spring! ethereal mildness, come!
> And from the bosom of yon dropping cloud,
> While Music wakes around, veil'd in a shower
> Of shadowing roses, on our plains descend."

This expectation of roses in spring reminds one of the fact that Thomson dwelt in Richmond Park, where the seasons are considerably more advanced than in Worcestershire. He is on surer ground when he forgets the flowers and looks at the landscape—

> "Meantime you gain the height, from whose fair brow
> The bursting prospect spreads immense around,
> And snatch'd o'er hill, and dale, and wood, and lawn,
> And verdant field, and dark'ning heaths between,
> And villages embosom'd soft in trees,
> And spiry towns by surging columns mark'd

Of household smoke, your eye excursive roams ;
Wide stretching from the hall, in whose kind haunt
The hospitable genius lingers still,
To where the broken landscape by degrees
Ascending, roughens into rigid hills,
O'er which the *Cambrian Mountains*, like far clouds
That skirt the blue horizon, dusky rise."

But, after all, Thomson only described the "Seasons" generally; he did not attempt to particularize the months. More modern poets — Shelley and Wordsworth and Keble and Arnold and Morris — took the months one by one, and analysed the peculiar grace of each. Tennyson is specially the poet of April. Arnold taught us to associate the thought of April with

" The springing pastures and the feeding kine ;"

but to Tennyson the month of mingled showers and sunshine is purely and joyously symbolical. He feels it at the marriage-altar—

" When crown'd with blessing she doth rise
To take her latest leave of Home,
And hopes and light regrets that come
Make April of her tender eyes."

His own strong youth is renewed in his veins,

"When first the liquid note beloved of men
Comes flying over many a windy wave
To Britain, and in April suddenly
Breaks from a coppice gemm'd with red and green."

He dreams of distant days when life was,

"Dewy-warm
With kisses balmier than half-opening buds
Of April."

In the gallant season of opening manhood, when the golden chain of friendship was still unsnapped, he and Arthur Hallam found life a succession of joyous Springs:—

"And we with singing cheer'd the way,
And, crown'd with all the season lent,
From April on to April went,
And glad at heart from May to May.

And, when the sun had gone down at noonday, and the "Shadow fear'd of Man" had overcast the way, it was still the return of April, triumphing over winter, that chased the gloom:—

"Now fades the last long streak of snow,
Now burgeons every maze of quick
About the flowering squares, and thick
By ashen roots the violets blow.

Now rings the woodland loud and long,
The distance takes a lovelier hue,
And drown'd in yonder living blue
The lark becomes a sightless song.

Now dance the lights on lawn and lea,
The flocks are whiter down the vale,
And milkier every milky sail
On winding stream or distant sea;

Where now the seamew pipes, or dives
In yonder greening gleam, and fly
The happy birds, that change their sky
To build and brood; that live their lives

From land to land; and in my breast
Spring wakens too; and my regret
Becomes an April violet,
And buds and blossoms like the rest."

But April has other associations, of an even more sacred and special kind than those which Tennyson connected with it. It is peculiarly the month of Easter. No doubt Easter may, and often does, fall in March; but it is never so truly Easter—it never delivers its message of victory over decay and life out of death, so convincingly—as when it speaks through "April Hopes." And here let me borrow from a writer, once ridiculously extolled, and now quite as unreasonably contemned — Joseph Henry Shorthouse—and let us listen to his

description of Easter Day, as it befel on the 9th of April, 1882:—

"Easter Day—an Easter morning such as even an English spring can sometimes afford, a morning bright with sunshine and cherry-blossom and flowers. The primrose, the daffodil, and the polyanthus were around the windows, and the fresh green of the woodlands tinted the distance, from which the Church bells were faintly heard—a season chosen by God for festival, who knows how many centuries ago?

"In many thousand churches from North to South of England, and over the breadth of what we may yet call this fair land, were the village altars decked, in the chill sweet morning air of country places, with no gaudy images, but with the 'fair white linen cloth' upon the wooden table, with fresh flowers above, and the worn slabs beneath that record the dim names of the forgotten dead. Amid the faint streaks of the early dawn, the faithful, kneeling round the oaken railing, take into their hands the worn silver of the Grail

—'the chalice of the grapes of God.' In these sacred places, sacred to the beauty of Earth and of Heaven alike, comes over us a blessed mood, in which all the fair scenes of life, the sunsets and the 'all-golden afternoons,' some back upon the mind. The loved and lovely appear again. Once again we roam in that fairy valley that lies behind each of us, to which come nothing but children and children's sports, into which nothing foul can enter, for the simple reason that only what was pleasant has remained in the memory of that magic time. Most blessed of all gifts, there abide with us all the best and kindly thoughts which we, unworthy of such guests, have by the Divine mercy been able to entertain. What shall we call this mood? It is the most precious thing we have. Shall we not dignify it by the loftiest name, and call it Religion? But, if this is too lofty a word, we will at least call it—and the altar and the white cloth and the flowers, we will at least call them—an allegory; or, to speak without irreverence, a Sacrament. They speak to us

of that exquisite refinement which is the peculiar gift and office of the Church — a refinement so perfect that it requires an initiation to comprehend it, though thousands are dimly conscious of its influence who do not understand either it or its source."

But now it is time to turn from sacred to secular thoughts, and from rural delights to the more prosaic concernments of the town.

Of set purpose I have disregarded the puerile associations of the First of April, known throughout the haunts of the young as "All Fools' Day"; and I have not paid their due homage to the Birthday of our National Poet and the Feast of our Patron Saint. But there is one event of April which, falling within my own recollection, demands a word of special notice in what is, after all, a Book of Memories.

"The Italian sentiment of England reached its climax in the reception accorded to Garibaldi by the Metropolis in April, 1864. 'I do not know what persons in office are to do with

him,' Mr. Gladstone wrote to Lord Palmerston, March 26th; 'but you will lead, and we shall follow suit.' The populace took the thing into their own hands. London has seldom beheld a spectacle more extraordinary or more moving. The hero in the red shirt and blue-grey cloak, long associated in the popular mind with so many thrilling stories of which they had been told, drove from the railway at Vauxhall to Stafford House, the noblest of the private palaces of the capital, amid vast, continuous multitudes, blocking roadways, filling windows, lining every parapet and roof with eager gazers. For five hours Garibaldi passed on amid tumultuous waves of passionate curiosity, delight, enthusiasm. And this more than royal entry was the arrival, not of some loved prince or triumphant captain of our own, but of a foreigner and a deliverer of a foreign people. Some were drawn by his daring as a fighter, and by the picturesque figure as of a hero of antique mould; many by sight of the sworn foe of Giant Pope; but what fired the hearts of most was the thought of him as the

soldier who bore the sword for human freedom. The Western world was in one of its generous moments. In those days there were idealists; Democracy was conscious of common interests and common brotherhood; a Liberal Europe was then a force and not a dream."

Lord Morley is at his best in this description of a hero's triumphal entry; but—

> "I, with uncovered head,
> Salute the sacred dead,
> Who went and who return not.—Say not so.
> 'Tis not the grapes of Canaan that repay,
> But the high faith which failed not by the way."

Clement Hugh Gilbert Harris was the only English volunteer for the Christian cause who fell in the Græco-Turkish War of 1897. He died for faith and freedom at the Battle of Pentepigadia on St. George's Day; and I here reproduce the solemn yet simply human words with which, in his private diary, he devoted himself to the sacred cause.

"*April* 5, 1897.—This may be the last notice that I shall ever write in this book; however, there is no reason to be sentimental. On the contrary, I feel in a most prosaic frame of mind.

I am off this afternoon to Arta, to enlist in the Greek Army; and let this be understood by those who read this book, should I never return—*of my own free will entirely*, having been persuaded by nobody to risk my life in the service of the Greeks; but rather having been hindered from carrying out my intention up till now by well-meaning friends. I have not time to write much this morning, but I only wish it to be clearly understood that no one is responsible in the least degree for the step I have taken, which to many may appear as an act of madness, but to myself (who have given the matter the fullest consideration), the least a man of honour can perform towards a country which, crying for liberty in the name of the Cross, has been insulted and thwarted by each so-called civilized Power successively. Unfortunately, I have no time to explain myself more clearly; but lovers of freedom will recognize a deeper motive for my thus offering myself to the service of a distressed and misunderstood country."

Bishop Wilberforce — a genuine lover of Nature, if ever there was one—is recorded to have said, when he was walking about his estate in Sussex—"If it were *man's duty* to settle at Lavington, and enjoy this peaceful atmosphere, these balmy breezes, these beautiful views; to cultivate one's farm, and tend one's garden, *who would wish to go to town?*" I have not the slightest doubt that the Bishop meant what he said; and yet, as soon as Parliament reassembled after the Recess, and people returned to London, and the season was in sight, he was to be found in his place in the House of Lords, or his favourite corner in the dining-room at the Athenæum, with the contented smile of the thoroughbred Londoner on his face, and every rural thought effectually excluded from his mind.

So with us to-day. We have spent ten days of the Easter holidays, very agreeably, with our friends in Sussex or Surrey; amid

> "Fields where soft sheep from cages pull the hay,
> Woods with anemones in bloom till May."

Perhaps it was not very warm. April can, if it likes, be chilly—

> "O how the spring of love resembleth
> The uncertain glory of an April day,
> Which now shows all the beauty of the Sun,
> And by and by a cloud takes all away."

Bleak beyond measure was the snowy dawn of April 19, 1881, when Lord Beaconsfield, after a long and gallant struggle, succumbed to the black north-easter. In April, 1770, Gilbert White reported "such a series of cold, turbulent weather, such a constant succession of frost, and snow, and hail, and tempest, that the regular migration or appearance of the summer birds was much interrupted. Some did not show themselves till weeks after their usual time, as the Black-cap and White-throat; and some have not been heard yet, as the Grasshopper-Lark and largest Willow-Wren."

The tardy appearance of the Black-cap and the White-throat leaves me undisturbed, and I think I could survive if I were never to hear a Grasshopper-Lark again. So the lateness of the season did not impair my enjoyment of

my friends' hospitality. In our absence, the mysterious rites of Spring-cleaning have been performed; and now, at the bidding of business or politics, or the more urgent behest of a family who crave for amusement and will not be denied, we turn our steps again towards the beloved Metropolis,

> "When well-apparelled April on the heels
> Of limping winter treads."

We find it beautifully clear and clean and bright; and we feel, or feign, surprise on seeing that the trees in the Mall, and the flowers in the window-boxes, and the shrubs in the Parks, are a full month in advance of their congeners in the country. "The streets are filled with light white-awninged carts, full of blooming plants, and women bearing baskets of charming posies make sweet the London air."

The departing month is bright with the promise of that which is to come; and surely Shakespeare had this transition in his mind when he described the vivacity of young Master Fenton—"He capers, he dances, he

has eyes of youth, he writes verses, he speaks holiday, he smells April and May."

> "A day in April never came so sweet,
> To show how costly summer was at hand,"

as came the forerunner of that Venetian gallant who set out to woo young Portia.

And now for Tennyson once again—

> "It might be May or April, he forgot,—
> The last of April or the first of May."

MAY

"O Mary, pure and beautiful,
Thou art the Queen of May;
Our garlands wear about thy hair,
And they will ne'er decay."

—J. H. NEWMAN.

WHEN the great Oratorian penned this high invocation, he was thinking of May as she can be at her best. But it must be admitted that she is a two-faced month. Let us harden our hearts to confront her less agreeable aspect, before we indulge ourselves in sunny dreams of her more gracious moods, and—

"The milk-white thorn that scents the evening gale."

On the 14th of May, 1861, Matthew Arnold wrote to his mother: "This is the first summer, or indeed spring, day. The wind changed in the night, and to-day it is south-west, with the lights and airs as they

only can be with the wind in that quarter in May, and spring coming on in its glory over all the country. One long, rigid succession of black north-east winds we have had, lasting through the rain of Saturday and Sunday. I thought they would never end, and was really depressed by them. Even this country[1] I am so fond of looked forbidding, and the flowers themselves were no pleasure. However, the change has come at last. About Old May Day (13th) they say one may always look for fine weather, and the rain, ungenial as it was, has wetted the grass and vegetation so thoroughly that now the warmth has come there is yet no sensation of dryness. Presently, I am going to my old haunts among the Cumnor hills, and shall come back with plenty of orchises and blue-bells."

To Shakespeare it seemed an explanation of unlooked-for visitants at untoward hours, that—

> "No doubt they rose up early to observe
> The rite of May."

[1] The neighbourhood of Oxford.

And most men who in romantic youth have felt the spell of Oxford, have once risen early to observe the "rite of May" on Magdalen Tower — once, but very seldom twice. Even as I write, the scene recurs, in all its fantastic and suggestive grace. The faint sun is struggling with the heavy mists of the Thames Valley, and the air is chill; and, all around, a haze of delicate greenness veils the meadows and the woods; and just at our feet the sinuous High Street winds like a river between its steep banks of fretted stone. Now, high in heaven, the first victorious sunbeam smites the crowning pinnacle, and a flood of melody greets the dawn of May.

"What do we up so early this May morn?
Hath Health the Huntress from some neighbouring hill
Blown such a blast of her enchanted horn
That youth forgot his slumber? Gathering still,
Quick, eager forms the solemn pathway fill:
Pass Magdalen's portal, scale her endless stair,
Still springing upward, like the lark, until
Bursts on the sense the fresh, cool Matin air
And cheerful speech of friends already gathered there.

And O! the rapturous beauty of the scene!
Silent and calm as some far fabulous shore
Where never barque of mariner hath been!
Yet full of ancient life, and mapped all o'er

With holy memories of the days of yore.
Dear home of towers and spires, and musical chimes,
And groves and gardens !—lovely evermore,
Yet far, far lovelier than at other times,
When first the bright-eyed Sun his orient pathway climbs.

But turn !—while we are dreaming there hath grown
A crowd about us. Lo, a tuneful choir,
White-robed, bare-headed, all eyes one way thrown :
As erst men waited till the eastern fire
Kindled the tremulous chords of Memnon's lyre.
And hark !—that well-known plaintive prelude o'er—
Five pulses of the clock !—which scarce expire
Ere soft as dew amid the silence soar
Seraphic sounds aloft, and this the strain they pour :—

'Te DEUM PATREM colimus,
Te laudibus prosequimur,
Qui corpus cibo reficis,
Cœlesti mentem gratia.

Te adoramus, O JESU !
Te, FILI Unigenite,
Te, Qui non dedignatus es
Subire claustra Virginis.

Actus in crucem, factus es
Irato DEO Victima :
Per Te, Salvator unice,
Vitæ spes nobis rediit.

Tibi, Æterne SPIRITUS,
Cujus afflatu peperit
Infantem DEUM Maria,
Æternum benedicimus.

TRIUNE DEUS, hominum
Salutis Auctor optime :
Immensum hoc mysterium
Ovante lingua canimus.'

Ah, you should hear it chanted!—for the strain
Grows weak and powerless fettered down to song—
Like a swift eagle prisoned with a chain,
Which else had soared the rolling clouds among.
Trust me, once heard, 'twould haunt thy memory long,
That calm sweet strain! And oft, when sundered far,
Brought low by sorrow, or oppressed by wrong,
'Twould soothe thy spirit—like the evening star—
Foretaste of what sweet things the songs of Angels are.

Now ring out all the bells a merry chime;
While the hoarse horn croaks forth, a league below,
The note which doubtless seems the true sublime
To urchins straining might and main to blow.[1]
Ring out, glad bells! and let the sleepers know
That, while they slept, we watched the month of May
Twine the first garland for her virgin brow.
Then bid them rise, for 'tis the prime of day:
And lo, the young Month comes, all smiling, up this way!"[2]

I know full well that Dryasdust will tell us, with pedantic delight, that this "Rite of May" is Druidical. Who cares? Whatever its origin, it has been for centuries one of those "last enchantments of the Middle Age" which make Oxford so divine. Nudity and woad soon made way for the splendid pageantries of the Mediæval Church, and the

[1] In allusion to the old custom of blowing "May horns" still practised by the boys of Oxford.

[2] *May Morning on Magdalen Tower*, by J. W. Burgon.

continuous spell of the Catholic Religion prolongs the reign of the dead.

But it is not only on the first of the month that May can wear a chilly and uninviting aspect. The sporting chronicler will tell us that on the 22nd of May, 1867, the Derby was run in a snow-storm; and Dryasdust, again perceiving an opportunity of exercising his peculiar gift, will hasten to say that the race was actually run in fine weather, though snow had fallen heavily in the morning.

"Sweet child of Nature, let them rave."

The point is that it can be very cold in May, and the precise hour at which the Derby snow-storm ceased may be left for the contributors to *Notes and Queries.* Even the end of the month will sometimes play strange tricks. On the 31st of May, 1873, Bishop Wilberforce thus described the appearance of his property under the Sussex Downs. "To-day I have ridden over to Lavington, and everything was in glory—horse-chestnuts, oaks, beeches, elms, rhododendrons. Only the

marks of the frost of the 20th were very sad—large oaks with every leaf shrivelled up and black as if they had been burnt."

Yes, May is a month with two faces; and now let us look to that more benignant aspect on which Shakespeare is never tired of dwelling. It must be admitted, in passing, that by abominating the idea of "snow in May's new-fangled birth" he admits the possibility; but his prevailing conception of the month is radiantly cheerful.

"As full of spirit as the month of May."

He carols of—

"Love whose month is ever May."

He feels that brawling and hostility are no fit "matter for a May morning." When he wishes to extol a maiden's beauty, he avers that she excels her rival "as much as the First of May doth the last of December." He envies a young gallant—

"His May of youth and bloom of lustihood."

Others, less than Shakespeare, have followed

in Shakespeare's steps, and have dwelt with curious unanimity on the festive character of—

> "The flowery May, who from her green lap throws
> The yellow cowslip and the pale primrose."

That character animates the conversation of Izaak Walton's *Piscator*, *Venator*, and *Auceps*, and perhaps accounts for the ease with which they glide from casual acquaintanceship to the footing of sworn friends and comrades.

"You are well overtaken, Gentlemen; a good morning to you both; I have stretched my legs up Tottenham-hill to overtake you, hoping your business may occasion you towards Ware, whither I am going this fine, fresh, May morning.

"*Venator.* Sir, I, for my part, shall almost answer your hopes; for my purpose is to drink my morning's draught at the Thatched-house in Hoddesdon."

In later days Matthew Arnold must have thought of it as a festive month, when he wrote of—

> "Maidens, who from the distant hamlets come,
> To dance around the Fyfield elm in May."

His great master, Wordsworth, conceived all the attributes of the perfect woman as—

"Drawn
From Maytime, and the cheerful Dawn."

Christina Rossetti blended the scenery of England and of Palestine when she sang the praises of the opening summer—

"Passing away, saith my God, passing away:
Winter passeth after the long delay:
New grapes on the vine, new figs on the tender spray,
Turtle calleth turtle in Heaven's May.
Though I tarry, wait for me, trust me, watch and pray.
Arise, come away; night is past, and lo, it is day;
My love, my sister, my spouse, thou shalt hear me say—
Then I answered, 'Yea.'"

The prose-poets have followed suit. George Eliot, an overwrought invalid, imprisoned in the dusty groves of the Regent's Park, looked back by a joint effort of memory and imagination, to the May days of her early life in Shakespeare's Forest of Arden.

"The wood I walk in on this May day, with the young yellow-brown foliage of the oaks between me and the blue sky, the white star-flowers, and the blue-eyed speedwell, and the ground-ivy at my feet—what grove of

tropic palms, what strange forms and splendid broad-petalled blossoms, could ever thrill such deep and delicate fibres within me as this home-scene?"

Here is a good description of a May which I remember well. The *Spectator* of 1875 is describing "An Italian Spring in England": "We were all of us grumbling all the winter, and not entirely without excuse, at the unprecedented length of the keen and gloomy weather. Most people caught cold in December, and never stopped shivering till near the middle of April; and certainly during March, dry as the month was, there were hardly above three days when any one could have persuaded himself that spring was near. Even in the south of England the hedges showed no leaf of green till long after the primroses in the copses and violets in the lanes were in luxuriant blossom, and at one time even sanguine people were heard to express fears lest all the trees had struck work, and given up the intention of becoming green again. In some places there were full as many

signs of spring on the trees in January as there were in the middle of April, and it looked at one time as if the trees had taken as severe a cold as the human beings, and were unable to shake it off. But for all this tardiness and reserve, we have certainly had a rare and a full compensation. It is the custom to talk of the beauty of an English May, but for seven years back, at least, May has been a month of shuddering and of blight,—of shrinking of the spirit and of wilting of the trees. And even the last lovely May the present writer can recall, the May of 1868, was not like the May of this year. Then there had been weather of unusual beauty earlier in the year, and the spring came upon us with none of the sudden loveliness of this year's spring. In England, almost for the first time within what is now a very considerable experience, the spring, long delayed, has come abruptly, with all the softness of an early summer, and yet with all the freshness of true spring. Not a single tree shows those painful signs of pinched or blackened leaves due to the frosts which follow on

soft weather. The weather of the last fortnight has been like the weather which the returning trade-winds bring to the tropics when the rainy season is over, only without the mid-day glare. So perfect is the freshness, and yet so sudden the softness and the brilliant lucidity of the air, that if the English people could in a single day change their habits to those of open-air life, we believe they would do so with common consent. Even an Italian spring could not rival the weather we have recently enjoyed. The only drawback—and it is so rare a phenomenon in England that it is hardly a drawback—is that there has been hardly any graduation visible in the leaf between the bud and the full bright green of early summer. A day's rain fell, and then the beeches, and oaks, and elms, were all, as by one consent, in full dress at once, and only the ashes and Spanish chestnuts kept back, so as to remind us that the summer was not quite here. The woods which were bare one day, even while carpets of primroses and anemones gave the ground inside them an almost unearthly brilliance, were all but full

out three or four days later. This is a sort of effect which we very rarely have in England, and though theoretically it seems a little hard to lose the beauty of the gradual change, practically it is no small compensation that what we ordinarily see is *not* a gradual change in one direction, but a succession of bursts and blights, from which at last the foliage emerges with many a seam and scar, telling of bitter troubles and sharp discouragements. We remember an innocent lady boasting that her tulip-leaves had crinkles in them which her friend's had not, evidently regarding those crinkles as marks of beauty when they were merely marks of blight. Well, in almost all English Springs a large number of the leaves are 'crinkled' by the frosts which succeed their first burst into leaf, and happy is the neighbourhood in which a good proportion of the leaves are not blackened as well as shrunken, in consequence of the indomitable way in which winter keeps returning and returning upon us after he has made believe to go. For our parts, we would gladly

compound, if we could, for such a spring as we are having now by bearing every year such a winter as we had this year, a winter when hardly any human being felt quite himself, or quite satisfied that he was not a little crazed by the long spell of repellent weather for the first three months in the year. Nothing gives so completely the sense of enfranchisement as the sudden springing-open of doors and windows, and the complete cessation of any need for the *shelter* of the house. Nothing, too, perhaps, causes so sudden an access of laziness, and desire to enjoy the wealth of mere existence, and live in the sensation of sunshine, colour, and fresh air; but then, even if one cannot be really lazy, there is some sort of approach to enjoyment in that half-laziness which indulges the longing for laziness, in leaning back to drink in glimpses of golden weather as one gets them through the open windows, and in the mere touch of the bright, soft air."

Among writers of the present day, I maintain that there is no better hand

at landscape-painting than Mr. Horace Vachell—

"For we were nursed upon the self-same Hill,"

and here is his description of a May day at Harrow, with one touch added by "a vanished hand":—

"Within half-an-hour John was passing through the iron gates. He had not visited the garden since that forlorn winter's afternoon, when he came here, alone, after bidding Desmond good-bye. He could recall the desolation of the scene—bleak winter dripping tears upon the tomb of summer. With what disgust he had perceived the decaying masses of vegetation, the sodden turf, the soot upon the bare trunks of the trees. He had rushed away, fancying that he heard Desmond's voice —'There is a curse on the place.'

"Now, May had touched what seemed dead and hideous, and lo! a miracle. The hawthorns shone white against the brilliant green of the laurels; the horse-chestnuts had 'lit their lamps.' Out of the waving grass, glimmered and sparkled a thousand wild flowers.

He heard the glad *Frühlingslied* of bees and birds. Then, opening his lungs, he inhaled the life-renewing odours of earth renascent; opening his heart, he felt a spiritual essence pervading every fibre of his being. Once more the chilled sap in his veins flowed generously. It was well with him, and well with the world."

That is, to my thinking, a perfect exposition of a most misleading idea—a "pathetic fallacy"—the sympathy of Nature with a human heart.

> "The world which was ere I was born,
> The world which lasts when I am dead,"

has very little concern with me or my feelings and hopes and experiences.

> "It never was the friend of *one*,
> Nor promised love it could not give,
> But lit for all its generous sun,
> And lived itself, and made us live."

That is boon enough for us, and it is idle to ask for more; yet we go on asking all our lives; and shall probably go down to the grave in the unshaken conviction that Nature weeps with us in our sorrows, and rejoices in our joy.

But this is a theme which has been touched by the hand of a master, narrating the events of the very month to which this chapter is devoted. Sir Walter is describing the approach of a thunderstorm, and "the oppressive heat, so unusual in Scotland at the end of May."

"'There is something solemn in this delay of the storm,' said Sir George; 'it seems as if it suspended its peal till it solemnized some important event in the world below.'

"'Alas!' replied Butler, 'what are we that the laws of nature should correspond with our ephemeral deeds or sufferings? The clouds will burst when surcharged with the electric fluid, whether a goat is falling at that instant from the cliffs of Arran, or a hero expiring on the field of battle he has won.'

"'The mind delights to deem it otherwise,' replied his companion; 'and to dwell on the fate of humanity as on that which is the prime and central movement of the mighty machine. We love not to think that we shall mix with the ages that have gone before us, as these broad black rain-drops mingle with the waste

of waters, making a trifling and momentary eddy, and are then lost for ever.'"

It seems almost a profanity to descend from such high discourse as this to the chit-chat of social life, and from the "great Minstrel of the Border" to Bulwer-Lytton and Disraeli and Thackeray. Yet such writers as these must be invoked, if we are to form any adequate notion of the charms of May in London.

"I hope I'm fond of much that's good,
As well as much that's gay;
I'd like the country if I could;
I love the Park in May:
And, when I ride in Rotten Row,
I wonder why they call'd it so.

A lively scene on turf and road;
A crowd is bravely drest:
The Ladies' Mile has overflow'd,
The chairs are in request:
The nimble air, so soft, so clear,
Can scarcely stir a ringlet here.

I'll halt beneath those pleasant trees,
And drop my bridle-rein,
And, quite alone, indulge at ease
The philosophic vein.
I'll moralize on all I see—
Yes, it was all arranged for me."

Lord Beaconsfield loved May, and chose "May Day, 1845" as the date on which to introduce one of his best novels to the world. "Is there," he asks in another place, "a more gay and graceful spectacle in this world than Hyde Park at the end of a long summer morning in the merry month of May? Where can we see such beautiful women, such gallant cavaliers, such fine horses, such brilliant equipages? The scene, too, is worthy of such agreeable accessories; the groves, the gleaming waters, and the triumphal arches. In the distance, the misty heights of Surrey, and the bowery glades of Kensington." That eulogy of London in May was written in 1837, and needs considerable revision in 1908. Rotten Row wears its gayest air, not "at the end of a long summer morning," but before breakfast. The "brilliant equipages" have gone with last year's snows; and, though the women may be as beautiful as ever, I have my doubts about the "cavaliers." But the natural beauties of the scene have been, not only unimpaired, but conspicuously enhanced,

by the lapse of years. Lord Llanover and Lord Mount Temple—each in his turn a First Commissioner of Works—are understood to be contending in the Shades for the credit of having been the first to plant flower-beds in the Park; and no more brilliant addition was ever made to the æsthetics of the town. No country garden that I know can compare with the beauty of Hyde Park in May.

> "Oh come! and, while the rosy-footed May
> Steals blushing on, together let us tread
> The morning dews, and gather in their prime
> Fresh-blooming flowers, to grace thy braided hair."

Only we must look sharp, lest that "grand old Gardener," Mr. Lewis Harcourt, should "catch us at it," as the verger caught the pilgrim at his prayers.

And now we will imagine ourselves to have done a long day's social work—paying calls and receiving them—driving and shopping and visiting the Royal Academy—going out to luncheon, and receiving our friends at tea—and, generally, sacrificing the Twelve Golden Oxen of the Sun according to the prescript

form and order. Dinner-time draws on, and May is essentially a month of dinners. Far ahead are the suffocative Dog Days, when the overcrowded dining-room reeks, and women collapse, and men, like so many Quintilians, "stare and gasp." In May one can dine comfortably, and oh! how well. I protest that the most casual glance at Sir Henry Thompson's *menus* for the month of May[1] enables me to understand—as nothing else enables me—the claim of May to be considered "the merry month."

Thackeray made fun of the musicians who, at the Dinner of the Bellows-Menders' Company, warbled a rustic madrigal beginning "Oh the joys of bonny May—bonny May-a-a-ay, When the birds sing on the spray." But really the music was aptly chosen. Out of the abundance of the mouth the heart speaketh; and we never feel the charm of May more persuasively than after *Purée d'Asperge* and *Ortolans aux Croûtes.*

When the rites of dinner have been duly

[1] In "Food and Feeding."

celebrated, and the perfume of our cigar has mingled with "the scented breeze of May," and we settle down to the festive business of the social night, we may safely place ourselves under the expert guidance of Bulwer-Lytton.

> "O'er royal London in luxuriant May,
> While lamps yet twinkle, dawning creeps the day.
> Home from the hell the pale-eyed gamester steals;
> Home from the ball flash jaded Beauty's wheels;
> From fields suburban rolls the early cart;
> Now rests the revel, now awakes the mart."

But somehow that allusion to the Mart displeases me. It is out of place—out of tune. May, as I conceive it, has nothing to do with business. Whether we choose to spend it in town or country, it should be a month of pure enjoyment.

Many, as the Greek Tragedian says, are the wonderful things of life, and nothing is more wonderful than the forms which enjoyment takes. A critical study of the month of May would be obviously incomplete if it made no reference to May Meetings; for May is the month when every religious society holds its Annual Meeting, and country cousins arrive

in droves for the anniversary festivals of the organizations which they love.

Five-and-thirty years ago, an observant critic wrote as follows:—

"For those situated at either pole of the ecclesiastical world, May is eminently a religious month. With the Catholic, it is the *Mois de Marie*, the month consecrated to ideal Womanhood. With the Evangelical Protestant, it is the *Mois de Meeting*, devoted to Exeter Hall and much speaking. Country parsons of the Evangelical persuasion time their visit to Babylon then, when it is leavened with the little leaven of Gospel Ministry, sadly inadequate to leaven its whole lump, seething as it is with the opposite elements of Rationalism and Romanism; and all the other ills that ecclesiastical flesh is heir to. Then the Church and the Conventicle meet together, the Platform and the Press kiss each other. The *Record* is in large demand, and the *English Churchman* runs into special editions."

Alas! Exeter Hall no longer exists, and the

devotees of May Meetings are constrained to murmur with regret—

"That those old Mays had thrice the life of these."

Still, they have found other places of assembly; and for a great many very excellent people the Annual Meeting of their favourite Society is, as May Day itself was to the May Queen—

"Of all the glad New Year, the maddest, merriest day."

But the charms of May are really inexhaustible, and I must bring this chapter to a close.

JUNE

"Just when the red June roses blow,
She gave me one, a year ago—
A Rose whose crimson breath revealed
The secret that its heart concealed,
And whose half-shy, half-tender grace
Blushed back upon the giver's face."

—A. A. Procter.

"SUMER is i-cumen in!
Sing Cuccu!"

It is, indeed, an old English song. Words and music alike come down to us from the beginnings of our national history, and they testify unmistakably to the fact that, in spite of Charles Kingsley, our forefathers detested the "Wild North-Easter" as cordially as we their sons, whom Kingsley called degenerate, and that "the Viking's blood" was frozen in their veins by the rigours of our English Spring. They felt, as we feel, the rapture of the Summer, as it stirred their

pulses and warmed the wholesome air and covered the face of the earth with beauty.

"Tired we are of Summer,
Tired of gaudy glare,
Showers soft and steaming,
Hot and breathless air."

Conceivably this may be true by the middle of August, but nothing could be further from the truth to-day. No—"Sumer is i-cumen in"—and we rejoice in its benignant presence, and "sing Cuccu" with heart at least, if not with voice.

"So, some tempestuous morn in early June,
When the year's primal burst of bloom is o'er,
Before the roses and the longest day—
When garden-walks and all the grassy floor
With blossoms red and white of fallen May
And chestnut flowers are strewn—
So have I heard the Cuckoo's parting cry,
From the wet field, through the vext garden-trees,
Come with the volleying rain and tossing breeze;
The bloom is gone, and with the bloom go I."

It is all very well for the cuckoo to talk like that; but the bloom is by no means gone. Beautiful herself, June is heir to beauties not her own. May has left some of her treasures behind. Lilacs still linger in shady

corners. Syringa fills the woodland ways with odours of Araby, while Ribes gladdens the eye with its rose-coloured festoons. The White May and the Pink strive with gracious rivalry in "distant Wychwood bowers." The laburnum makes every garden-lawn a Field of the Cloth of Gold.

> "All through the summer night,
> Those blossoms red and bright
> Spread their soft breasts, unbending, to the breeze."

Does any one nowadays read "The Christian Year"? If he does, he will remember that Keble thought it necessary to say in a footnote that he was here referring to Rhododendrons, which in 1827, when "The Christian Year" was published, had just been imported into England by horticulturally-minded nabobs, and which must have struck the poet's eye, habituated to the delicate shading of the Cotswolds and the Isis, as a transcendent vision of glorious and luxuriant colour. And, above our heads, is a sky of sapphire, and beneath our feet the fresh grass is as a carpet of emerald, studded with the yellow

gold of buttercups and cowslips. Yes—"Sumer is i-cumen in," and even the smoke-dried Londoner, who can only see these glories with the eye of memory, sings his nearest approach to "Cuccu" for very joy and thankfulness of heart.

That at this gracious season there should exist such a creature as a "Smoke-dried Londoner" (outside the ranks of the million or so who cannot help themselves) is a remarkable phenomenon. We have seen already that Lord Beaconsfield recommended such a division of the year as should bring us into London for the first note of the muffin-bell, and send us into the country for the first note of the Nightingale; and it is to be remembered to his credit that, when circumstances permitted, he acted on his own theory. Whenever he could escape from Downing Street and Grosvenor Gate, the Carlton and the House, you might find him, crowned with a Tyrolean hat and leaning on a spud, in what he grandiloquently called "the German Forest" of Hughenden; or sauntering along the beechen-

shaded lanes of the Chilterns, in quest of the violets which he genuinely loved, and the primroses which in "Lothair" he praised as material for a salad. After his final fall from power—a fall beyond question precipitated by the Afghan and Zulu Wars—a neighbour who knew him well, and, though of different politics, esteemed him, said at a public meeting at High Wycombe: "We congratulate Lord Beaconsfield on having no more to do with General Roberts and Lord Chelmsford. He will find himself much happier in the society of those universal favourites—General Jacqueminot and Marshal Niel."

That most picturesque and moving of all English festivals—"The Fourth of June" at Eton—takes its origin from the fact that June 4 was the birthday of King George III. As long as he presided over the social system, ultra-loyal or ceremonious people—denizens of that innermost circle which surrounds the throne—stayed in London over the 4th of June, so as to pay their duty at Court on the King's Birthnight; while his

younger and perhaps happier subjects were celebrating the auspicious day after their own less ceremonious manner at Surley Hall and The Christopher.

Then hey! for the note of the nightingale, and the beauties and delights of halls and castles in thorn-studded parks and rose-clad gardens; and so on, through the mellowing autumn, till the meeting of Parliament recalls Peers and Knights of the Shire to the fogs and factions of Westminster.

When poor old George III. was laid aside, and society was dominated by his graceless son, the order of the fashionable year was changed. The Prince Regent had no love of the country. All his tastes, habits, and amusements were of the town, towny; and society naturally took its tone from the Heir Apparent. Thenceforward the season began to stretch further and further into June, and beyond, till it absorbed July and invaded August. Fortunately, the sacred claims of the grouse forbade a more continued demand on the energies of a Parliament

which was still composed of sportsmen; so the close of July began to be recognized as "the end of all things." The Goodwood meeting crowned and completed the Season, and the world of politics and fashion betook itself to rural life and sport till the 31st of January, or the first week of February.

So, in the lapse of a century, it has come about that we who, if we cannot be Leaders of Fashion, can at least be followers of it, and who, if we are not the Rose, like to live as near it as circumstances permit, have agreed by common consent to rob ourselves of "the sweet o' the year" in those scenes where it is sweetest. I firmly believe that June in the country is delicious to every sense. I know it was so forty years ago at Harrow, when the enthusiastic Farrar tried to instil into us his own magnificent regret, that we—a rabble of boys in the Shell and Fourth Form—

> "Should use the days of summer but to live,
> And breathe but as the needful element
> The strange, superfluous glory of the air—
> Nor rather stand in awe apart, beside
> The untouched time, and murmur o'er and o'er
> In awe and wonder—'These are summer days.'"

On the 15th of June, 1871, Harrow School celebrated the Tercentenary of its foundation. An unprecedented company of Old Harrovians gathered on the Hill, and, although, as some one said, the accumulated rain of three hundred years drowned the speech-making and drenched the fireworks, the day was memorably happy.

> "Not to River nor Royal Keep,
> Low Meads nor level Close,
> Up to the sturdy wind-worn steep
> *Levavi oculos*;
> To four red walls on a skyward climb,
> Towering over the fields and Time!"

The "four red walls" were still echoing the cheering and the songs, when festivity was turned into sorrow. On Midsummer Day, George Clement Cottrell, a strikingly handsome boy, and "next choice" for the Eleven, while standing umpire in our Sixth Form game, was accidentally killed by a blow from a cricket-ball. It was truly said of him that "he was, in the best of senses, a *friend* to his school-fellows. Pure, and gentle, and good, he won all hearts during the five years of his Harrow life, and he has left

behind him in death a regret which would, we believe, have surprised the modest estimate he had formed of himself. His funeral was attended by the whole school, on the morning of June 29th, and we are sure that not one who stood beside his grave in the early sunshine, will easily forget the impression of a scene which is happily so rare in the annals of school-life."

During all the intervening seven-and-thirty years, Midsummer Day has never been dissociated in my mind from the memory of George Cottrell. *Beati mundo corde—Sit anima mea cum sanctis.*

At Oxford (unless, indeed, the Last Enemy of undergraduate joy, in the shape of "Schools," was permitted to violate the golden weeks), June was a brief experience of Paradise. As one looks back upon it, balls and suppers and cricket-matches and boat-races seem to mingle, fantastically but congenially, with the greenness of the meadows where we gathered the fritillaries, and the smoothness of the lilied

Cherwell, and the "volleying rain and tossing breeze" borne down on us from Wytham Woods. "What appetites! What merriment! Ah me, what youth!"

I hope that my friend, Mr. Quiller-Couch, will allow my admiration for his genius and my sympathy with his feeling about Oxford to plead my excuse for an extensive but irresistible theft.

A LETTER

ADDRESSED DURING THE SUMMER TERM OF 1888 BY MR. ALGERNON DEXTER, SCHOLAR OF —— COLLEGE, OXFORD, TO HIS COUSIN, MISS KITTY TREMAYNE, AT —— VICARAGE, DEVONSHIRE.

DEAR KITTY,—
At length the term's ending;
I'm in for my Schools in a week;
And the time that at present I'm spending
On you should be spent upon Greek:
But I'm fairly well read in my Plato,
I'm thoroughly red in the eyes,
And I've almost forgotten the way to
Be healthy and wealthy and wise.
So "the best of all ways"—why repeat you
The verse at 2.30 A.M.,
When I'm stealing an hour to entreat you,
Dear Kitty, to come to Commem.?

There are dances, flirtations at Nuneham,
Flower-shows, the procession of Eights:
There's a list stretching *usque ad Lunam*
Of concerts, and lunches, and fêtes;
There's the Newdigate, all about "Gordon"—
So sweet, and they say it will scan.
You shall flirt with a Proctor; a Warden
Shall run for your shawl and your fan.
They are sportive as gods broken loose from
Olympus, and yet very em-
-inent men. There are plenty to choose from,
You'll find, if you come to Commem.

I know your excuses; Red Sorrel
Has stumbled and broken her knees;
Aunt Phœbe thinks waltzing immoral;
And "Algy, you are such a tease;
It's nonsense, of course, but she *is* strict";
And little Dick Hodge has the croup;
And there's no one to visit your "district,"
Or make Mother Tittleby's soup.
Let them cease for a sennight to plague you;
Oh, leave them to manage *pro tem.*,
With their croup and their soup and their ague,
Dear Kitty, and come to Commem.

Don't tell me Papa has lumbago,
That you haven't a frock fit to wear,
That the Curate "has notions, and may go
To lengths if there's nobody there";
That the Squire has "said things" to the Vicar,
And the Vicar "had words" with the Squire,
That the Organist's taken to liquor,
And leaves you to manage the choir:

For Papa must be cured, and the Curate
  Coerced, and your gown is a gem;
And the moral is—Don't be obdurate,
  Dear Kitty, but come to Commem.

Have you thought, since that night, of the Grotto?
  Of the words whispered under the palms,
While the minutes flew by and forgot to
  Remind us of Aunt and her qualms?
Of the strains of the old *Journalisten?*
  Of the rose that I begged from your hair?
When you turned, and I saw something glisten—
  Dear Kitty, don't frown; it *was* there!
But that idiot Delane in the middle
  Bounced in with "Our dance, I—ahem!"
And the rose you will find in my Liddell-
  -And-Scott when you come to Commem.

Then, Kitty, let "Yes" be the answer.
  We'll dance at the 'Varsity Ball,
And the morning shall find you a dancer
  In Christchurch or Trinity hall.
And perhaps, when the elders are yawning
  And rafters grow pale overhead
With the day, there shall come with its dawning
  Some thoughts of that sentence unsaid.
Be it this, be it that—"I forget," or
  "Was joking"—whatever the fem-
-inine fib, you'll have made me your debtor,
  And come,—you *will* come?—to Commem.

It will have been inferred from the pensive tone of some foregoing remarks that it is a good many years since I spent June in the country;

and, while I thus brood over departed, and perhaps imaginary, joys, I seem to hear an echo of my dear friend Matthew Arnold, who, when Lord Morley of Blackburn, in an excess of enthusiasm, said he would rather have been Wordsworth than anybody, replied —"Oh no, you would not; you would wish you were dining with me at the Athenæum." It is salutary to be reminded that there are joys inside, as well as beyond, the Cab-radius, and that even the country in June has its drawbacks—such as the difficulty of getting one's fish fresh, the paucity of evening papers, and the necessity of paying porterage to the young woman from the three-miles-distant post-office who steps over with a vital telegram when she has quite finished her tea. The London Parks are to the full as beautiful as Woburn or Blenheim. Waterer's Rhododendron Show is a joy for ever. All one's friends are here, though perhaps only for ten days. Hospitality, gaiety, and good-fellowship reign supreme. Yes, June in London is, as Miss Edgeworth's lady's-maid

said, "Vastly put-up-able-with." The much-belauded country does not monopolize all the enjoyments of existence. Here, as there, "Sumer is i-cumen in," and, from an overflowing heart, I sing "Cuccu" for the joys of June.

JULY

"'Tis sweet whene'er in dim July
The gathered storm comes sweeping by
(Or passing hot the hours of Noon
Wax from the cloudless skies of June)
To mock the shower and sunbeam, laid
At ease within some sylvan glade;
Where hazel, beech, and pine o'erhead
Their sheltering roof of leaves outspread."

—J. H. WIFFEN.

IN the verse just quoted the poet has surely taken the epithet which belonged to the moment and attached it to the month. "Dim" precisely expresses the sunless sky, the clouded oppressiveness, of the last half-hour before the thunderstorm begins to peal and pour.

Keble, as observant a Nature-worshipper as Wordsworth himself, described exactly the deep hush which falls upon the land as the blue-black clouds gather and the wind dies down.

" Deep is the silence as of summer noon,
When a soft shower
Will trickle soon,
A gracious rain, freshening the weary bower—
O sweetly then far off is heard
The clear note of some lonely bird."

This is absolutely true to life, but "Dim" is not the epithet for July as a whole.

In London, at any rate, July is, in many ways, the most brilliant month of all. Society, which has been sorely distracted by the periodical flittings of Easter and Whitsuntide and Ascot, now settles down to the serious pursuit of Pleasure, realizing that there are only four more weeks in which the designs of the Season can be accomplished. For those four weeks the world is given up, body and soul, to merry-making. Every hour of the working day is allotted to its particular amusement. The craze for cycling before breakfast, which prevailed ten years ago, when breathless Dowagers, with anguish and terror written legibly on their blanched faces, careered round Battersea Park on wheels which defied their control, perished long ago through its inherent

foolishness. Nowadays we realize that even Pleasure-seekers must sometimes sleep, and that, if we are to stand the social racket till 3 A.M., night after night and morning after morning, we cannot get up much before nine. A novelist for whose talents I have the highest respect—Miss Rhoda Broughton—once drew a delightful young man of fashion under the name of "Freddy Du Cane." Let him stand for the better type of young Englishman whose inclination prompts him, and whose means enable him, to give the best years of his life to the undeviating pursuit of Pleasure.

May and June have been months of practice, in which, by hard labour, Freddy has inured himself to the physical fatigues which his career involves. By July he is in the perfection of training, and it is no fault of his if every hour of the month does not make its full contribution to the sum of enjoyment. Morning is Freddy's serious time. He does not wake with a "head," for he is a clean-living youth, and an over-indulgence in strong drink is the sign of a cad. But, after eating lobster

salad at 2 A.M., he has no particular appetite for breakfast. So he lounges through his refection of strong tea and grilled kidneys, and braces himself for fourteen hours of strenuous endeavour. He puts on duck breeches, and brown boots, and a straw hat, and goes for a canter by the waters of the gleaming Serpentine, nor draws his bridle-rein (as they say in old romances) till he wheels round within a hundred yards of Kensington Gardens, and sees, piercing the eastern sky, the ruddy pile which houses Sir Ernest Cassel, and the campanile of the Roman Cathedral. He is too young and much too healthy to regard the bright scene with a sentimental eye.

"But where is now the courtly troop
That once rode laughing by?
I miss the curls of Cantelupe,[1]
The laugh of Lady Di."[2]

Freddy doesn't miss them, for he never knew them. He never so much as heard of Lord Cantelupe, and the "courtly troop" of forty years ago is not likely to distract

[1] George John Frederick, Viscount Cantelupe (1814–1850).
[2] Lady Diana Beauclerk (afterwards Huddleston), died 1905.

his thoughts from the "pals" of the hour, and that "Best Girl," whom he discerns cantering up on a hog-maned pony. We may not linger on the bright rencounter; for now the fresh air and exercise have restored Freddy's appetite, and it is time for him to return to his flat in Mount Street or Knightsbridge, and make himself smart for the day. Dressing is a serious affair with him and with his servant, and prolonged are the debates about ties and waistcoats; whether those well-cut but much-worn trousers can be creased into presentability, and whether with a falling barometer it is wise to put on varnished boots.

By two o'clock these problems are solved, and Freddy, smart, hungry, and cheerful, is bowling along to some hospitable house where the hostess is always at home for luncheon.

The afternoon is heavily charged with social duties. A dozen tea-parties, some enhanced by "Music," and others with "Recitations" added to their normal terrors, solicit his presence; but he is too sharp to be caught with such chaff, and leaves these dismal orgies to

ladies and clergymen, and Society-loving Dons from Oxford who find an inexplicable enjoyment in a Tyburnian tea-party. Freddy, if he is actively inclined, plays Polo at Ranelagh, or pulls a willing oar in a water-party at Taplow. Or he motors to a garden-party at Osterley or Syon; or improves the shining hour by leaving cards on people whom he does not wish to find at home. And now, before we know where we are, it is dinner-time again; and by a quarter-past eight, Freddy, looking very smart with a white waistcoat and a Malmaison carnation, trips into a Taxi, and is off to dinner—not, we may be pretty certain, at his own expense. After dinner, perhaps an hour at the Club—for Freddy eschews Evening Parties—and then a ball, or even two, where the best of floors and bands, a supper of luxuries, and a delicious "sit-out," bring the day's labour to a satisfactory close. He lights a cigarette, strolls home by broad daylight, says "Good night" to the policeman, who replies "Good morning, sir"; and goes to bed happy in the thought that

to-morrow will be as enjoyable as the day just past.

Among the bright events of July, perhaps the brightest are the two great Cricket Matches at Lord's. When I use the word "great," I mean no invidious reflections on the Australian matches, or on "Gentlemen *v.* Players"; but "Oxford and Cambridge," and "Eton and Harrow" are great with a peculiar greatness. Though it may seem paradoxical, it nevertheless is true that the game played signifies very little, and the skill displayed still less. If the game were Lawn-Tennis or Football, the occasion would be quite as interesting; and, if each side got out for twenty runs, the ardour of the onlookers would not be perceptibly abated. If we want to see cricket we can go to the Oval. We go to Lord's, at least on those sacred days in July, in order to celebrate the Festival of Friendship, and to renew our youth in the companionship of those who were young with us.

The Oxford and Cambridge Match lacks, as far as I know, its Sacred Bard. 'Tis a pity,

for no gathering is more reminiscent, or more suggestive. It is peculiarly the occasion on which clergymen foregather. Gaitered dignitaries who, forty years ago, batted for Oxford or bowled for Cambridge, emerge from their rural Palaces, not to take part in the May Meetings, but to throng the stands at the University Match. They rub shoulders with brawny curates who, twelve months ago, were cherishing hopes—too often fallacious—of their "Blue," and are now toiling in the malodorous slums of Bermondsey or Haggerston; and the interval of years which separates the two classes is filled by a continuous sequence of clerical life, infinitely diversified as to doctrine and practice, appearance and costume, but compacted into a solid mass by the strength of the bond which binds hard-working men in middle and advancing age to the brightest scenes and hours of opening manhood.

The Eton and Harrow Match has been described with admirable skill by Mr. Vachell in "The Hill," and by Mr. Fox in "Follow

up!" Excellent is Mr. Fox's introduction to the performances of the second day:

"'There is no reason to doubt that, given a continuance of fine weather, the Metropolitan ground will once again to-day be graced by a radiant galaxy of youth and beauty.'

"'Oh, knock off!' growled Dick.

"Dora persisted. She had read out two newspaper accounts of the first day's cricket at Lord's, and now she chose to torment her brother with selections from the 'gas.'

"'Bright eyes, gay gowns, flushed young faces, will once more be the order of the day. The aged will repeat to delighted boyhood the triumphs of their own young days——'

"'Saints preserve us! If there's one thing I hate, it's old gentlemen grousing away about when they were Twelfth Men at Lord's. They've all been Twelfth Men some time or other.'"

That is an admirable touch; but Mr. Vachell takes a more genial view of the emotions which the match evokes.

"After luncheon the crowd on the lawn

thickens. The ladies want to see the pitch, and, shall we add? to display their wonderful frocks. The enclosure at Ascot on Cup Day is not so gay and pretty a scene as this. The Caterpillar has secured Iris Warde, and looks uncommonly pleased with himself and his companion—a smart pair, but smart pairs are common as gooseberries. It is the year of picture hats and Gainsborough dresses.

"'England at its best,' says Miss Iris.

"'And in its best,' the Caterpillar replies solemnly. 'But I daresay you'll marry an Etonian, and wear Light Blue after all.'"

It is unnecessary to retrace the course of this most inspiring of all athletic contests, whether it terminates in Victory or Defeat or Draw. The real interest of the day lies much deeper down than any stratum which Cricketing Correspondents or Sporting Papers can reach. It touches the fountains of human emotion. Alike the Playing Fields and the Hill feel the magic of the spell; and the sons of both alike may make the Eton poet's words their own—

"I may have failed, my School may fail;
I tremble, but this much I dare;
I love her. Let the critics rail;
My brethren and my home are there."

And now July is deepening into August. Goodwood beckons us to its sunlit lawns; and, further ahead again, there is the "many-twinkling smile of ocean," the "innumerable laughter of the sea"—and the Yacht Club at Cowes.

Now Garden-Parties just a little way out of London begin to allure us from the glare and dust. We "motor down, and stay to dine." People begin to ask one another what Lord Beaconsfield called "the dark question"—Where are you going this year? There is a sense of impending dispersion in the air. It is the beginning of the end.

"The social critics cease to be observant towards the end of July. All the world then are thinking of themselves, and have no time to speculate on the fate and fortunes of their neighbours. The campaign is too near its close; the balance of the Season must soon be struck, the great book of Society made. In a

few weeks, even in a few days, what long and subtle plans shattered or triumphant!—what prizes gained or missed!—what baffled hopes, and what broken hearts!

'The baffled hopes must go to Cowes,
The broken hearts to Baden.'"

Deep in the heart of the Surrey hills there stands a Memorial Cross. It is of the form commonly called Celtic, carved out of rough grey granite. It displays the letters "S. W.," with a shepherd's crook cut diagonally through them, and, underneath, this date: "July 19, 1873." That, and nothing more. All round about it is a landscape of unsurpassed beauty. On the right runs the high line of Ranmoor Common, with its chalky, precipitous sides and hanging woods. To the left the ground is tossed about in irregular hillocks and hollows, all covered with gorse and bracken and heather, and the rough vegetation which English commons love. Straight ahead the path enters the wild woodland and is lost to view. The solitude is absolute, and the silence so

profound that the finest sounds of nature are audible even to unaccustomed ears.

There stands the lonely Cross; and there on one day this summer[1] a little band of Pilgrims fortuitously gathered. One was a son of the man whom the Cross commemorates; one was a lady whose happiest years were passed under his roof. One was a man, long past eighty, who had travelled from afar to renew, as at a sacred shrine, the most inspiring memories of his working prime. With him came his daughter, still recalling, as the saddest moment of a bright girlhood, the date which the Cross displays. The fifth had never seen the face nor heard the voice which was so inexpressibly dear to his companions; but had felt, through some other medium than physical contact, the attraction of the character and the spell of the soul. We met, some of us, as strangers; we separated all as friends; and the happy accident which had brought us all together seemed to one of the pilgrims worthy of commemoration.

[1] 1908.

On the 19th of July, 1873, Samuel Wilberforce, son of the Great Emancipator; Bishop first of Oxford and latterly of Winchester; the "Remodeller of the Episcopate"; the golden-mouthed orator; the irresistibly delightful companion; the most passionately beloved of fathers and of friends, met his death —or, as one might better say, was translated— on the spot where the Cross now stands.

"From his own Oxford's storied hall,
Her stream by light oars ruffled,
To where, beside the plane-trees tall,
His Winton's bells are muffled,

The whole land wears the garb of grief
For her great son departed—
Her peerless Prelate, Statesman, Chief,
Large-souled, and tender-hearted."

So wrote Bishop Alexander (now Archbishop of Armagh) on the morrow of the fatal accident. The late Lord Granville, who was riding with the Bishop when it occurred, left a graphic description of it. He and the Bishop had travelled by train from London to Leatherhead, in order to pay a visit from Saturday to Monday at a place near Dorking

where Lord Granville's brother—Mr. Leveson-Gower—lived, and where Mr. Gladstone was to spend the "week-end." It was arranged that the journey from the station to the house—some fifteen miles—should be made on horseback, so the travellers mounted at Burford Bridge, close under Box Hill. The Bishop could always have said with Browning:

> "Sing, Riding's a joy.
> For me, I ride."

And as soon as he was in the saddle—I quote Lord Granville—"his spirits became like those of a boy; galloping very fast up the long hill, apparently careless as to the ground that we were riding over, talking incessantly on political, religious, and social topics. . . . At the bottom of the hill I asked him whether he was ever tired by a long ride. 'Never on such a horse as this.' We broke into a gentle canter over a smooth stretch of turf. I was riding on his left, slightly in advance. I heard a thud on the ground, and, turning round, I saw

him lying motionless. From the groom's account, it appeared that his horse, probably a little tired, had put his foot in a gutter of the turf, and stumbled without coming down. The Bishop must have turned a complete summersault, for his feet were in the direction in which we were going, his arms straight by his side. The position was absolutely monumental." All was over, and over in a moment.

The body was lifted from the ground, and carried to the house of the late Lord Farrer, who lived close by at Abinger, where it lay till the inquest was over and it was carried to its last resting-place. Lord Granville went on to his brother's house, and told the awful news. "I never shall forget the expression of sorrow on the faces of Mr. Gladstone and of my brother when I arrived at Holmbury, at the end of this fearful ride."

The tragedy happened on a Saturday afternoon. Those who are interested in psychical research probably remember what was seen at Mr. Evelyn's house, Wootton, close by

the spot, on the evening of that fatal day. On Sunday the Bishop's death was known in London, and on Monday all England was in mourning. When Carlyle heard the manner of the Bishop's ending, he said this only—"What a glad surprise!" The Bishop's life-long friend, Mr. Gladstone (who always reckoned him among the three men with the greatest power of natural oratory whom he had ever known), commemorated him in a magnificent oration:—

"Who can count the numbers—they are not in hundreds, they are not in thousands, they are in hundreds of thousands—who in every part of this country listened from time to time to the tones of that silvery voice, sometimes like a murmuring brook, sometimes like a trumpet-call? No spot in this land can be found—certainly none where there is any considerable concentration of the people—in which that extraordinary influence of his has not been brought to bear, and there was not one in which, when he visited it, he did not seem to spend his entire self on the

purpose which he had before him, as though nothing had come before it in his life and nothing was to come after it."

This was a sufficiently remarkable tribute from an unequalled judge of oratorical effect; but even more attractive is the following trait of character, described in the same speech:—

"If I wished to know the true character of Bishop Wilberforce, I would not ask it from those who have admired his powers as displayed in Parliament, or who felt his charm in society. I would go to other classes of the community, and know from them what was the true and deep nature of the man. To one class above all others, were I able, I would make my appeal. I would make it to those who, from time to time, have been called to suffer under the calamities of life; and I affirm, from a wide personal knowledge, that wherever there was affliction in the world, thither the heart of Bishop Wilberforce was drawn by irresistible power; there, if he had a friendship, he repaired for its exercise;

there, if he had no friendship existing, he endeavoured to found one."

No wonder that a man of whom this could be truly said still lives in the hearts of those who knew him, though five-and-thirty years have sped their course since they saw his face and heard his voice and felt the magnetic pressure of that caressing hand.

I said at the outset that Bishop Wilberforce was the "Remodeller of the Episcopate." Down to his time a bishop, as a rule, sat in state in his palace, dispensing a dignified hospitality, and calmly ready (if not passionately eager) to transact diocesan business and advise in diocesan difficulties. Henceforward all this was changed. Physical activity, combined with spiritual fervour, made Bishop Wilberforce ubiquitous. "No one who recalls those days will ever forget the magical effect of his presence—like the coming of spring to a winter landscape—in the little nooks and corners of an agricultural county; his cordial appreciation of what was done by others, the brilliant wit of his conversation, the

inimitable tones of his wonderfully modulated voice, and the fascination of his look and manner." There are two special functions of the episcopal office which gained, from his way of performing them, a new and marvellous impressiveness. These were Confirmation and Ordination. In confirming, he threw his whole soul into what he was doing, for he realised that it gave him an opportunity, which could never recur, of making a permanent dint on the character. Whether he was ministering in the stately Chapel of Eton College or in the humblest village church of Berkshire or Oxfordshire, his intense sympathy with youth and its difficulties obliterated all distinctions of class and condition, and gave his words an equally direct access to the hearts of peers and of ploughboys. As regards his Ordinations, the feelings of those who received the Ministerial Commission at his hands may best be exemplified by the following testimony:—

"I hardly knew the Bishop, but he ordained me, and I stayed at Cuddesdon with the other

candidates. I remember most distinctly the impression he made upon us. One evening, as we were talking together after one of his addresses, one said: 'Well, all I know is, that if the Bishop were to say, "I am going to the Cannibal Islands to-morrow; who will go with me?" I should go directly,' and each of us said, 'So would I.'"

Perhaps enough has now been said to account for the constant pilgrimages of love and reverence and regret which still wend their way to that lonely Cross among the Surrey hills.

> "Fame is a fleeting breath;
> Hopes may be false or fond.
> Love shall be love to death,
> And perhaps beyond."

It is really no paradox to say that the oblivion into which the Bishop's personality has fallen is due in part to the completeness of his success. The work which he set himself to do—or, as I think he would rather have phrased it, the work to which he was called—was the re-creation of the episcopal

office. No weaker word suffices; for, as regards what can be seen and heard by men, the office of a Bishop under Wilberforce's moulding hands became, to use a Pauline phrase, a new creation.

Sydney Smith, writing in 1828, gave this vivid epitome of episcopal life and duty: "It is pleasant to loll and roll and accumulate —to be a purple-and-fine-linen man, and to be called by some of those nicknames which frail and ephemeral beings are so fond of heaping upon each other." This description tallied closely with the facts. Richard Watson, Bishop of Llandaff, is believed to have never once set foot in his diocese, but spent a tranquil life on the shores of Windermere, where he employed his leisure in "building farm-houses, blasting rocks, enclosing wastes, making bad land good, planting larches, &c." "By such occupations," he says, "I recovered my health, preserved my independence, set an example of a spirited husbandry, and honourably provided for my family." In the pious duty mentioned in the last paragraph this

excellent prelate must have been materially assisted by the fact that he held, together with his Bishopric, the rich Archdeaconry of Ely, and also drew the tithes of sixteen parishes. Nearly every Bishop added to the revenue of his See the emoluments of some subsidiary office. Thomas Newton was Bishop of Bristol and Dean of St. Paul's. Edward Legge was Bishop of Oxford and Warden of All Souls'. Henry Courtenay was Bishop of Exeter and Rector of St. George's, Hanover Square. The Bishops of Rochester were always Deans of Westminster. The valuable Rectory of Stanhope, in Durham, was held in succession by four Bishops of different Sees. These good men took their duties very easily. Edward Harcourt, Archbishop of York, who drew £40,000 a year for forty years, and, according to Mr. Gladstone, was rather a favourable specimen of his order, found the usual practice of travelling about the diocese and confirming in the principal centres altogether too laborious; so, at stated intervals, he caused all the children of Yorkshire who needed Confirmation

to assemble in York Minster, and then, instead of laying his hands on the head of each, as the Church directs, he used to stand at the steps of the choir, and, lifting his hands, pronounce the appointed formula, once for all, over the whole kneeling assemblage.

But time and space forbid further illustration. It is enough to say that during the first forty years of the Nineteenth Century the characteristics of the episcopal office were opulence, dignity, and ease. In 1845 this agreeable ideal was rudely shaken—though not at once destroyed—by the appointment of Samuel Wilberforce to the See of Oxford. The new Bishop was just forty, remarkably young for his years, and endowed with the most signal activity of both body and mind. Acceding to a great office in the very fulness and freshness of his powers, he revolutionized its spirit, its ideals, and its working methods. A senior clergyman of the diocese, who was by nature a praiser of time past, commented ruefully on the change which he had lived to see: "I recollect when a Bishop of Oxford

never drove into Oxford from Cuddesdon" (the episcopal residence, some five miles out) "without four horses and two powdered footmen; and what does Sam do? He gets upon a horse, and rides in by himself, without so much as a groom behind him! I met him myself to-day."

Cuddesdon Palace (so called, though it is not the least like a Palace) became the scene of a constant and genial hospitality. Bishop Wilberforce excelled as a host, and Lord Carlisle wrote, after visiting him: "I admire and envy the Bishop's fearless hospitality, not minding who know each other, and how they will suit." His care for his guests extended to the minutest details. Dean Burgon narrates that once, after a great Missionary meeting in the Sheldonian Theatre at Oxford, the Bishop, who was in the chair, beckoned to Burgon, who was in the area, and, when he approached the dais, murmured in his ear: "I've quite forgotten the fish for dinner to-night. Would you kindly go to the fishmonger's and order turbot and smelts

for eighteen, with lobsters for the sauce? Let all be sent down to my carriage at All Souls' at once—*and don't forget the lobsters.*"

Excelling as host, Wilberforce was also in great demand as a guest. His unquenchable vivacity, his buoyant humour, his intense sympathy with all the joys and sorrows and interests of his friends, made him universally welcome. His stories, which he told with inimitable skill, flew from mouth to mouth; and probably no name rose so constantly and so spontaneously as his to the surface of conversation. "Have you heard the Bishop of Oxford's latest?" or, more familiarly, "I must tell you what Sam said." His oratory, whether in the pulpit or on the platform, was of the most persuasive order; and he was, even his enemies being judges, one of the most formidable debaters in the House of Lords. What he was in the sacred duties of his office was sufficiently testified by the quotations which I made in a former paper—notably from Mr. Gladstone, who, when he was translating his lifelong friend from the

See of Oxford to that of Winchester, wrote thus about the period then drawing to its close: "I thank God that it has not been in the power of jealousy, or cowardice, 'or any other evil creature' to detract one jot from the glory of that truly great episcopate, the records of which you have written alike in the outward visible history of the Church and in the fleshly tables of the hearts of men." Writing twenty years ago about the Bishop's grave at Lavington, on the slopes of the Surrey Downs, one of his closest disciples moralizes thus:—

"The Church, no less than the world, is prone to forget its greatest benefactors, and few will care to remember, when a few decades of years shall have run their course, how largely our Church of England is indebted to him who sleeps below. None but those who knew him will have the faintest conception of what an exquisite orator, what a persuasive preacher, what a faithful Bishop — in every private relation of life what a truly delightful person—is commemorated by

the stone which marks the grave of Samuel Wilberforce."

In my account of the Bishop's death I alluded to "what was seen at Wootton" on the evening of the fatal fall. I have been asked to elucidate my allusion, but, as I could not do so without invading the sanctity of private life, I will only say that the appearance of human beings at the moment of departure to those who have been specially their friends is a phenomenon which rests on testimony too strong for challenge, whatever the theory of it may be; and that such an incident occurred in connexion with the sudden death of Bishop Wilberforce. Far more remarkable, to my thinking, was an incident which occurred on the day after the Bishop's death, and which I now reproduce at the suggestion of a friend. We all know, in the region of sacred history, the enormous inferences of doubt and difficulty and negation which have been drawn from slight discrepancies between four narratives of the same events, written fifty years after those events occurred.

In Bishop Wilberforce's case the discrepancies arose on the day immediately following his death, and in the testimony of those who had lifted his dead body from the ground. Yet no one doubts that he died at Abinger, on the 19th July, 1873. I transcribe the letter in which the late Lord Farrer narrated the incident, and I commend his narrative to those who are perplexed or distressed by real or supposed discrepancies between the four Evangelists :—

"Bishop Wilberforce fell from his horse and was killed on a rough bit of ground about ten minutes' walk from my house. I was watching the men play cricket in front of my house, when Lord Granville's servant galloped down, saying that the Bishop was thrown. Most of us went up at once—amongst others my gardener, my bailiff, and an intelligent labourer, and we four were first on the spot. The Bishop was lying feet foremost on the spot where he had fallen, the body still warm ; and Lord Granville was kneeling beside him, with his coat

off. It was on ground covered with the short turf of a Surrey waste, and there was a slight—very slight—hollow in the ground, at which probably the horse had dropped, though without coming down, letting the Bishop fall over his head. We got a stretcher from the garden, and carried him into my house.

"Next day—Sunday—there were a number of pressmen on the spot to get particulars. I went up there with the three men I mentioned. Two of us—my gardener, I think, and myself—felt sure that the body was exactly in one spot—that, I believe, on which the Cross now stands. The other two—men quite equally worthy of credence—felt sure that the spot from which we lifted him was another spot, three or four yards away. I felt no doubt about my own recollection; but have no reason for thinking my own recollection more trustworthy than that of those who differed from me."

AUGUST

"'Twas August, and the fierce sun overhead
Smote on the squalid streets of Bethnal Green,
And the pale weaver, through his windows seen
In Spitalfields, looked thrice dispirited."

—MATTHEW ARNOLD.

WHEN the author of this sonnet was an Inspector of Schools he quoted in one of his Annual Reports an incomparable letter from a schoolboy, who described the Summer Holidays as "the glad season of sun and flowers." Mr. Swinburne, in "A Midsummer Holiday," expanded the same thought into majestic verse—

"Stately stand the sunflowers, glowing down the garden-side,
Ranged in royal rank arow, along the worn grey wall,
Whence their deep disks burn at rich midnoon afire with pride,
Even as though their beams indeed were sunbeams, and the tall
Sceptral stems bore stars whose reign endures, not flowers that fall."

Presumably both the schoolboy and the poet had their habitation in the country, where heat is really pleasurable, and where, from under the friendly shade of beech or cedar, one can enjoy the fiery splendours of the ribbon-border and the luscious scents of heliotrope and lilac-blossom. Those whose lot is cast in London find their feeling about the summer holidays more aptly expressed by the more pensive poet who saw the pale weaver at his toil in Spital-fields. For "weaver" read "writer," and for "Spitalfields" "Stucco Place," and the parallel is complete—nay, even the former emendation is not necessary. Cowper derided—

"A sedentary weaver of long tales,"

and that is a title which might perhaps be justly (though not generously) applied to a writer who, month by month, tells the plain story of his unambitious life.

Well—seen through my windows in Stucco Place, I was looking and feeling "thrice dis-pirited," when there burst in upon my moody solitude three young friends fresh from a

Public School. It was the first day of one of "those ill-judged comings-home twice a year that unsettle children's minds so," and which that Spartan step-father, Mr. Snawley, rightly condemned. My visitors had breakfasted early, had travelled twelve good miles, and were perfectly prepared to "do justice," as the phrase is, to whatever might be going in the way of luncheon. And here let not the reader, misled by the easy humour of out-of-date satirists, prepare himself for horrid tales of ill-regulated appetite and ill-assorted food. Had any tendency in that direction shown itself, I should have felt myself conscientiously constrained to repress it, since I have ever held that the ancient and practised gastronomer is bound to place the gathered fruits of his experience at the disposal of his young fellow-pilgrims along the road of life.

That was a true and wise friend of youth of whom Sir Algernon West tells us in his latest book of Recollections. He said to a young fellow-guest when a maraschino jelly came round: "My dear boy, always help yourself to

the knobs; for, as the jelly is made upside down, all the liqueur runs into them." But no such counsels of gastronomic perfection were needed by my young friends. After the successive courses of a well-planned meal, they showed a generous emotion at the sight of Dressed Crab which did them credit; and their appreciation of a lightly iced champagne was beyond their years. When the inevitable end was reached, my guests, cheered but not inebriated—filled but not satiated—summoned a taxi and bade me a courteous farewell. I was interested to learn that they had no immediate intention of returning to their parental homes, but purposed to enjoy themselves in London as long as their resources permitted. Lord Chancellor Campbell, justifying the great length of school-holidays in England, observed that, "if the holidays were not long, there would be no opportunity of cultivating the domestic affections." Apparently my guests thought that the whole of August and three weeks of September would amply suffice for that pious duty, even though two or three days

of July were bestowed upon the pleasures of the town. But pleasures can seldom be dissociated from expense, and a slight "Grant in Aid" seemed to be suggested by my knowledge of the circumstances. Only I stipulated that, in return, I should receive by an early post an account of the dissipations to which my luncheon had been the prelude. I hope that I violate no confidence when I impart it to my readers. I will call my correspondent Z, and his friends X and Y.

"After we left you, we went to the Coliseum, where we enjoyed ourselves; and afterwards on to the Caledonian Club for tea with X's father. We then went to see 'When Knights were Bold,' and shouted with laughter; after that we went on to the Trocadero, and had a ripping supper, and so to bed. Next morning X said he was seriously ill, so Y and I attacked him, and he gradually recovered. After breakfast we went to Rowland Ward's animal place, and on to the Academy, and then to a Swimming

Bath. Then we had lunch at Verrey's Restaurant. We proceeded to the Hippodrome, and had a good time. We came back to tea, dressed, and went to 'Havana.' Lor', how we laughed! Then on to the Troc., and bed. Next morning I went off, and only had 7d. in coppers when my ticket was paid for.

"Thanks to you, I don't think I ever enjoyed myself so much in all my life.—Yours affectionately, Z."

A graceful tribute; and I am happy to have made my contribution to this innocent merrymaking.

I am writing on Bank Holiday. It is a scorching day. The sky is intensely blue, and illustrates afresh the wise dogma of Samuel Rogers—"Nothing is so blue as blue. Azure isn't half as blue." If I were trying to paint it, I should despair of getting the colour with cobalt, and should try ultramarine. Against this over-arching blueness, the domes and pinnacles of the White City gleam as

though they were fashioned of virgin chalk. The streets are empty. The motors have poured themselves, with all their shrieks and stenches, into the unoffending country. The occasional foot-passenger, clinging desperately to the shady side, pauses, in evident dismay, before he braves the passage of the torrid Square, and the children of the Mews, fevered by cricket among steaming muck-heaps, flatten envious noses against the locked gates of Stucco Gardens.

Such are the circumstances in which I am spending my Bank Holiday, and they may be admitted to be something less than ideal. I lay down my pen, and, leaning back in my chair, try to revive, by the help of the Enchanter's Wand, the memory of Augusts which perished long ago.

"It was a fine mid-harvest time, not too warm for a noon-day ride of five miles to be delightful; the poppies glowed on the borders of the fields; there was enough breeze to move gently, like a social spirit, among the ears of uncut corn, and to wing the shadow

of a cloud across the soft grey down; here the sheaves were standing, there the horses were straining their muscles under the last load from a wide space of stubble; but everywhere the green pastures made a broader setting for the cornfields, and the cattle took their rest under wide branches."

That is well said, by a writer whose touch never failed in the description of our English Midlands. And yet I am not quite sure that I look back with unmixed regret upon distant years, when I went further afield and spent the August Feast of St. John Lubbock in the country houses of my friends. I recall the endless debates on such absorbing topics as whether it was best to open the windows and let in the air, or shut the shutters and keep out the heat; whether it was more enjoyable to ride till eight and dine at a quarter to nine, or to dine at 7.30 and sit in the garden after dinner. I recollect quite vividly the wasps in the apricots, and the centipedes in the tea-cups, and the midges everywhere. I recall forced participation in

cricket-matches, undertaken in the vain hope of securing popularity among the young, when a cut for one was greeted with derisive shouts of "Well played, old Crock!" or "By Jove! he's a stiff 'un." Or for cricket we might substitute croquet—perhaps of all known games the most trying to the temper, and (till golf appeared) the most suggestive of decrepitude and senility. Or perhaps one's host, perceiving the disgust with which these recreations inspired one, suggested a quiet ride before dinner, on a horse which perpetually stumbled from sheer sleepiness, or else resented the flies with a disconcerting vivacity. And then the "long calm evenings," such as Pen extolled, thereby eliciting George Warrington's unsympathetic response—"Devilish long, and a great deal too calm; I've tried 'em." Or a few neighbours to dinner—squires full of County Council and Agricultural Show, and clergymen discoursing (as in *The New Republic*) about Justification by Faith, and the measles. No—August in London may

be dull; but, when compared to August in a Country House, it is as Paradise to Purgatory.

The shades of Night are falling on Bank Holiday, and soon we shall have to face the problem of a more extensive vacation. Perhaps we have got six weeks to "put in," as they say, somewhere. What are we to do with them? Of course, one can spend them at the Sea Side. In the Summer of 1865, Matthew Arnold wrote, in a vein of tender reproach, to his adored mother: "How can you live in a place with the absurd, and worse, name of *Marine Retreat?*" Before we engage our rooms at "Undine Cottage," or "Sea View," let us take counsel with Lewis Carroll.

"I had a vision of nursery-maids;
Tens of thousands passed by me,
All leading children with wooden spades—
And this was by the sea.

If you like your coffee with sand for dregs,
A decided taint of salt in your tea,
And a fishy taste in the very eggs—
By all means choose the sea."

One may go Yachting; but, with regard to life on a yacht, I might say with the late

Lord Granville—"If I were not sick, I should be bored." The Alps are always tempting us, through their beauties, to dare their dangers and discomforts; but, as we grow older, we wisely leave Alpine climbing to junior curates and athletic Dons. One may adapt for one's own use the title of a book which was popular when I was young—"Autumns on the Spey"—and plan "Autumns on the Cheap," which shall carry us from one house to another of our hospitable friends till the holiday is over. But not without reason does the Church, just at this season, instil into our minds Solomon's salutary counsel—"Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour's house, lest he be weary of thee, and so hate thee." And last—or perhaps it should come first—there is Scotland, and all that Scotland means at the opulent season when her stern beauty is transfigured into purple and gold. Here let Mr. Frederic Harrison be heard—"Bond-street tradesmen are puffing their patent guns, boots, luncheon-luxuries, and wonderful inventions for turning Sutherland into May Fair. The year draws

on; half the summer is done. The Sacred Day arrives, and all the peace and beauty of the Highlands are gone. Gangs of smart people pour over the country of Rob Roy, with Hyde Park carriages and Belgravian footmen. Lord's, Hurlingham, Henley, and Ascot are played over again amid the heather and the tarns. A compound essence of Monte Carlo, Wiesbaden, and Royat is dished upon the desolate solitudes of the Grampians. It's all 'awfully jolly,' very smart indeed, and everything is really the last thing out. The 'Glorious Twelfth' has come back. When a short Act is passed making it penal to kill a vertebrate animal except in the way of trade it will be possible to enjoy the hills, the moors, forests, and copses of this beautiful island all the year round. Till that day arrives, let those who love the Highlands go there before 'the Glorious Twelfth of August' comes round."

SEPTEMBER

"The freshness of May,
and the sweetness of June,
And the fire of July
in its passionate noon,
Munificent August,
September serene,
Are together no match
for my glorious Queen."

—J. H. NEWMAN.

"SEPTEMBER serene"—the epithet is admirably chosen, and would have commended itself to Lord Beaconsfield, who, after the epoch-making Session of 1867, announced at the Hughenden Harvest Home, that he was "not quite up to politics in September." But it applies with peculiar force to a September enjoyed in London. "It seems to the present writer that the inhabitants of London are scarcely sufficiently sensible of the beauty of its environs. With

the exception of Constantinople there is no city in the world that can for a moment enter into competition with it. For himself, though in his time something of a rambler, he is not ashamed in this respect to confess to a legitimate Cockney taste; and, for his part, he does not know where life can flow on more pleasantly than in sight of Kensington Gardens, viewing the silver Thames winding by the bowers of Rosebank, or inhaling from its terraces the refined air of graceful Richmond. In exactly ten minutes it is in the power of every man to free himself from all the tumult of the world, and find himself in a sublime sylvan solitude, superior to the cedars of Lebanon, and inferior only in extent to the chestnut forests of Anatolia."

So said Lord Beaconsfield; and London, always delightful, is, I think, at its best in September. Critics might say, not altogether without truth, that it is dark in winter, and overcrowded in the season, and uncommonly hot in a normal August. But *Nunc formosissimus annus.*

There never was a moment when I could, with any semblance of truth, have made Sir George Trevelyan's sportsmanlike sentiments my own, and have wished to be—

"Tramping after grouse or partridge through the soft September air,
Both my pockets stuffed with cartridge, and my heart devoid of care."

But still I dwelt for a good many years in Arcadia, and watched, though I did not share, the sports of the Philistines. In those days I used to hear that 7 P.M. was the latest moment at which you could see to hit a partridge on the 1st of September. Apart from all questions of "blood-sports," as my vegetarian friends call them, I consider the days of early September exactly the right length. You get home to dress just as it is growing dark, and no one compels you to sit in the garden after dinner, with centipedes falling into your coffee-cup. The weather is neither hot nor cold, and the London parks are in their highest beauty. The falling leaves and misty glades in Kensington Gardens suggest all the romantic associations of Gustave Doré's

forests, with a tall trooper of the Life Guards and a bashful nursery-maid, for a Red Cross Knight and an Enchanted Princess. Traffic is mitigated; the "Road-Hog" is ravaging the provinces; and it is possible for elderly gentlemen to cross Piccadilly without being destroyed by *omnibi* (as the classical lady said), or reviled in the vernacular by Conductors. Our neighbours and acquaintances are at German baths or on Scotch moors, and their place is filled by troops of leisurely aliens, who lounge and saunter and gaze into shop windows. Everywhere there is a sense of space and freedom. You can breathe in the theatre, and kneel down in church. If you are on friendly terms with the manager, you get a box for nothing; and the verger at St. Paul's or the Abbey, differentiating you at a glance from the Transatlantic crowd, pops you into the most comfortable stall.

Myself a person of studious habits, I revel in the comparative emptiness of the Reading-Room at the British Museum, and spend long days in what Matthew Arnold called "that

Happy Island in Bloomsbury." When the day's work is done, and we are "stepping westward" and south-westward, we find a delicious serenity brooding over Clubland. If your own club is open, you have, as Thackeray said, a vast and agreeable apartment with twenty large servants at your orders, who, having nothing to do, are anxious to prevent your desires and make you happy. "The butler bustles about with your pint of wine, and, if you order a dish, the chef himself will probably cook it. What mortal can ask more?" Or perhaps your club is closed, and members of the Megatherium are entertained at the Sarcophagus. This, too, I reckon an agreeable experience. Perhaps the library is less serious than that in which you habitually study, but there are a great many more novels in the smoking-room. It is pleasant to probe the resources of an unknown cellar, or to realize, by a happy accident, a particular sort of claret, at once flavourable and inexpensive, which all your life long you have been pursuing as though in a dream.

But a club after all is what Mr. Gladstone once memorably said that the National Liberal Club was *not* to be—"a Temple of Luxury and Ease," and, at the best, it must be a place of selfish enjoyment. Quite different is the dining-room of domestic life, where altruism presides and the noble virtue of hospitality is benignantly displayed. Mr. Leveson-Gower, who excelled in it, said: "Hospitality always appears to me to be praised more than it deserves. At least, there was no merit in my case. Somewhat like Tony Lumpkin, who did not mind disappointing his friends by not meeting them at the tavern, but was unwilling to disappoint himself, I did not give dinners to please my guests but to please myself." But whatever be the dinner-giver's motive, the effect on the receiver is equally pleasant, and a dinner-giver in September ranks high among the benefactors of the race. People who have never spent a September in London imagine that for this month at any rate hospitality is suspended. It is a profound error. I remember Lord Rosebery once saying that a

man who would keep open house all September would find himself the most popular personage in society; and there are many men who, without soaring to such splendid heights of benevolence, contrive to pursue the noiseless tenor of their hospitable way through the deadest season. They are like the Prophets in the Cave, and their existence is unsuspected till a happy chance evokes them.

To begin with, there are the dignitaries of St. Paul's and the Abbey; and, if you happen to have been an Oxford friend of Canon Boanerges, or to have served on a committee with Archdeacon Waterman, you run a very good chance of being asked to share some tributary grouse, or a Norwegian salmon sent as a token of respect by a sporting Minor Canon. Then there are the doctors—or at least those of them who, being on their promotion, watch their opportunities when the bigwigs are away. Young Dr. Pilkins is looking after Sir Tunley Snuffin's patients and has an eye to the reversion of that eminent man's practice. Young Pilkins is not quite

as innocent as he looks, and he will be very happy if you will take pot-luck in Upper Wimpole Street and try a new Rhine-wine which he is now recommending to all his patients.

Then again the journalistic family is here in force, equally ready to entertain or to be entertained; and actors and actresses must sup, even though Tom Garbage's play, in which they have been acting, has just been laughed off the stage. Then of course there are the Diplomatists, the "Hebrews of Politics," as Lord Beaconsfield called them; and there are our friends who are detained in town by domestic interests; and those who are "just passing through," between Marienbad and Doncaster; and one who has come up to take his boy to Harrow; and one who has got to see his married daughter off to India; and a third who has heard of a horse, at a farm near Hendon, which is likely to suit him, besides the miscellaneous host who must get their hair cut or consult a dentist. Now all these people must dine somewhere; if they

have nothing better to do, they will bestow an evening on an old friend, or else they will entertain the old friend at a club, and take him to a theatre or a music-hall.

In well-constituted families, the fact that one is always in London in September is duly borne in mind, and the spoils of the chase and the fruits of the earth "keep the spell of home-affection" unbroken. Sydney Smith felt this when he wrote to his distant friends: "Your grouse have not arrived, but even the rumour of grouse is agreeable." "You have no idea what handsome things were said of you when your six partridges were consumed to-day. Wit, literature, and polished manners were ascribed to you—some good quality for every bird."

But there are days to be lived, as well as evenings; and Clubland on a bright September afternoon is not the most attractive spot on earth. Then hey! for what my friend Mr. Massingham would call "the lost liberty of the road." I am convinced that, if it were given to us *rerum cognoscere causas*—to know

why things have come to be as they are—we should discover that Motoring was invented for the benefit of those whom professional work, or domestic duty, or their own pensive habit, detains in London during the exquisite month of September. It were impiety to taste no fresher air than that of Hampstead Heath, to see no brighter vegetation than that of Battersea Park. The motor has brought all the delights of the country within the compass of half-an-hour from Hyde Park Corner, and has combined them with those other delights, not less real but formerly incompatible, of dinner in London and the hallowed couch of home.

Myself a humanitarian to the backbone, I should shrink in horror from the thought of running over Mr. Massingham as he homeward plods his weary way; or even of hustling his fowls, or making his chaise-pony sidle into the ditch. And I couple with my love of my fellow-creatures a strong instinct of self-preservation. So I praise no headlong courses, no "record-breaking" rapidities, no murderous or suicidal risks. But twenty miles an hour

hurts neither man nor beast, and a September day spent from 9 A.M. till 7 P.M. in the Valley of the Thames, or among the Chiltern Hills, or on the Surrey Downs, sends the smoke-dried Londoner back to his loved Stuccovia a healthier and a better man. "Using, as not abusing," should be the Motorist's Motto.

In fine, I love my September in London and my London in September; and this amiable trait is so well known in the circle to which I belong that, if I am encountered on the pier at Brighton or seen alighting from the train at Bletchley or Peterborough, I am at once charged with faithlessness and inconsistency. But this is unjust. It is not I that change, but London. I once heard Sir William Harcourt say, when arranging the legislative programme of the session, "Well, Mr. Speaker, after March comes April," and the statement was received with cheers. After September comes October; and October in London is a premature and shabby winter, whereas in the country it is the last, and perhaps most beautiful, month of summer. And then

again there is the little, sedulous voice of Domestic Economy, which painfully iterates that the "spring-cleaning" is overdue, and that my absence from home would be cordially welcomed. Thus urged, I yield; and for the next six weeks quarter myself upon my kinsfolk, even to the third generation of cousinship, or on acquaintances who have rashly said at the last Garden-Party of the season, "If you are coming our way this autumn, do look us up." But all the time I say my prayers with my windows open towards London, and halfway through November its kindly mists close once again over my willing head.

I have described my Septembers as they now are. But once on a time they wore a different complexion. In those far-off days I dwelt in Arcadia, fifty miles from Epping Forest, where the fallow-deer still bound and fox-cubs gambol and the badger plays hide-and-seek with the sporting denizens of Whitechapel; far even beyond the range of the Surrey Stag Hounds, with which, if I mistake not, Mr.

Jorrocks first acquired the rudiments of "the Sport of Kings."

Every Oxford man — almost every casual traveller—will recognize Henry Kingsley's description of September in the Valley of the Thames: "Boisey is a great sheet of rolling woodland four or five miles square, which, in two points close together, heaves itself up so high as to be a landmark for several counties. The greater, and all the highest, part of it is unbroken beech-forest; but, as you come lower, it begins to get broken open by wild green lanes, tangled fantastically at their sides by bramble, sweet-briar, wild rose, and honeysuckle, by which a few solitary cottages stand here and there; picturesque cottages generally, standing alone, and not stinted for garden-ground. As you get lower, the fields become more frequent and larger, and you are among farms, generally embosomed in dense clusters of dark and noble elms; below this, steep fields stoop suddenly down to the level of the broad river-meadows, and around three-fifths of the circle winds the Thames—by day a

broad river of silver; in some evenings, when the sun has just sunk behind the dark dim wolds of Oxfordshire, a chain of crimson pools.

"Dim, mysterious wolds are those of Oxfordshire across the river; rolling, hedgeless, uncultivated chalk down, capped always by the dark level bars of woodland: a land of straight though somewhat lofty lines, with no artistic incident for miles, in strong contrast to the fantastic prettiness of the elm hedgerows of the neighbouring Berkshire. A very melancholy piece of country, almost as melancholy as some warren lands in Norfolk, or, one suspects, of Lincolnshire, else why did a Lincolnshire man write—

'When from the dry dark wold the summer airs blow cool
On the oat-grass and the sword-grass, and the bulrush in the pool'?—

two of the most melancholy and beautiful lines in our language, more than worthy of Wordsworth. A lonely, dim-looking county, that Oxfordshire, when merry hay-making and merrier harvest were over, and the September sun was blazing down due west."

My own Septembers were generally spent, not indeed in Oxfordshire, but not far off, in a country which was once unbroken forest, stretching from the chalky ridges of the Chilterns to the sluggish waters of the Ouse and the Nene, and from the corn-loving Vale of Bedford westward to that sister vale, nursing-mother of noble cattle, which encircles Aylesbury and impinges upon Oxfordshire.

The merits of that country from the point of view of regular Fox-hunting—the organized pursuit of the adult animal—I prefer not to discuss; for, if I did so, I might involve myself in controversy with the supporters of the Oakley and the Hertfordshire, or the respective liegemen of Lord Southampton and Mr. Selby-Lowndes. To-day it is Cub-hunting, and Cub-hunting only, that fills my thoughts, and Nature co-operates with Memory to reproduce the past. The yellowing foliage and sodden turf of Stucco Place, the autumnal freshness in the air, the faint sunshine, the light breezes, the fleeting clouds, and the pale blueness of the sky—all combine

to create and enhance the illusion. I close my eyes and lean back in my armchair, and instantly am forty miles from London and twenty years old—an undergraduate in the Long Vacation.

I have been called at half-past six, and have dressed myself in tweed jacket and waistcoat, with neat grey breeches and gaiters. The date of my reminiscence may be approximately fixed by the fact that we had just then discovered the great physiological truth that Nature has provided one with a hole in front of the knee for the express purpose of accommodating the top button of one's gaiter. Before that epoch-making discovery we had buttoned our gaiters up the outside of the leg. So slowly does science move. At "seven sharp" I have breakfasted in a dining-room decorated with pictures of "Tom Moody's Burial," "Lady Salisbury's Hounds" (the progenitors of the present Hertfordshire pack), and sundry hunters long since passed to their eternal oats. And now it is 7.30, and we are in the saddle—my father on a four-year-old whose

education for the ensuing season must now be begun in earnest; and myself on what the unsophisticated would call a big pony, but the knowing will recognize as a Galloway, blessed with a rather hard mouth, but active as a cat and enduring as a reindeer, game to gallop all day, and quite capable of surmounting any such object as one is likely to encounter when cub-hunting in woodlands. A schoolfellow of mine, whose opportunities of observing sport had been confined to Prince's Gate and Folkestone, once contributed to our School Journal what he styled a Hunting Song. The refrain recurs pleasantly to memory—

"When the skies are blue, and the woods are green,
We hasten away where the fox is seen.
Tally-ho!"

And really, though his contemporaries from Leicestershire and Warwickshire chaffed his head off, it was not a bad description of Cub-hunting. In half-an-hour we are in the heart of the woodlands; no longer, in the legal sense, Forest, for the forests of

Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, and Northamptonshire were disafforested seventy years ago; but still retaining all the outward characteristics of forest scenery. The meet is at the "Shire Oak," where one county touches another; and all around is virgin woodland. The company which gathers round the Master and his "dappled darlings" is small but various. Here is a young squire, in cord breeches and beautifully glossy boots, on a two-hundred-guinea mount; a jovial-looking parson in black gaiters on a serviceable cob; three or four well-mounted farmers, for the days of Agricultural Depression are not yet; some schoolboys, just at the end of their holidays, and emulously anxious to show Eton that Harrow and Rugby can ride just as well. But the group contains one figure infinitely more attractive than all these put together. Is she—or does my memory play me tricks?—the prettiest girl in the world? Be that as it may, she certainly looks her very best on horseback. Sir Walter Scott once saw and described a similar vision:—

"It was a young lady, the loveliness of whose very striking features was enhanced by the animation of the chase and the glow of the exercise, mounted on a beautiful horse, jet black, unless where he was flecked by spots of the snow-white foam which embossed his bridle. Her long black hair streamed on the breeze, having in the hurry of the chase escaped from the ribbon which bound it. Some very broken ground through which she guided her horse with the most admirable address and presence of mind retarded her course, and brought her closer to me than any of the other riders had passed. I had therefore a full view of her uncommonly fine face and person, to which an inexpressible charm was added by the wild gaiety of the scene and the romance of her singular dress and unexpected appearance."

Some few words in the description would have to be changed if it were to be presented as an accurate portrait. What was a "singular dress" in 1715 had become a commonplace long before 1873, and a workmanlike habit, cut short in the skirt and fitting like a glove,

excited no surprise. We had not yet found a fox, so there was no "animation of the chase," and the "long black hair" had been too securely plaited to "stream on the breeze." But otherwise the description may serve.

And now we are on the move. The "broken ground," through which my Die Vernon guides her horse, is the rough and sandy floor of a "black fir forest," such as Kingsley loved; just now, under the influences of sun and moisture, giving off the most delicious smell from its pink bark. The floor is carpeted with fir-needles and bilberry plants; and brown bracken and scarlet Mountain Ash add a touch of pleasurable colour. The air is as soft as butter, and the horses are moving freely, yet not pulling an ounce. Surely existence can never be more delightful than it is just now. I am not quite as inflammable as Frank Osbaldiston, nor as philosophical as Robert Browning, yet something of what they felt I feel to-day:—

> "Then we began to ride. My soul
> Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped scroll

Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
Past hopes already lay behind;
What need to strive with a life awry?

Had I said that, had I done this,
So might I gain, so might I miss.
Might she have loved me? Just as well
She might have hated me—who can tell?
Where had I been now if the worst befell?
And here we are riding, she and I."

"Here we are riding;" for a faint whimper from a clump of underwood and a sudden commotion of huntsman and whips, and a more or less genuine excitement in each member of the little company, announce that he whom we seek is at home and that something is happening. "Then we began to ride." Yes, we are riding now, and living in all our senses as we ride.

"Through bush, through briar"—but not, thank goodness, "through park, through pale"; for that would mean jumping, and for jumping a park-paling neither the Galloway nor his rider is by nature framed. Then again, like Tom Watchorn before me, I have "no notion of leaping a navigable arm of the sea," and I rejoice to think that the nearest brook is five miles off.

And now we have crossed "the hard high-road," and instantly find ourselves in quite different scenery. Instead of the column-like firs, with long vistas opening up in every direction between their stems, we are in a dense tangle of stunted oaks, interspersed here and there with feathery birches, "muffled to their knees in fern," and under foot the soil is soft and swampy, and the adder makes her dwelling in the deep dark loam.

And now . . . but here I pause. I never professed to care about hunting, and I decline to say how the morning's gallop ended. Was there "plenty of the animal about"? Were the cubs properly hustled? Did the young hounds get the disgusting treat for which they were yearning? What prospects did the morning offer for the winter's sport? I cannot even pretend to care a jot. I have had three hours of delicious exercise, in the scenery which I love best in the world, and in company which might make an anchorite vivacious.

"Not Heaven itself upon the past has power,
But what has been has been, and I have had my hour."

OCTOBER

"October brings the cold weather down,
When the wind and the rain continue;
He nerves the limbs that are lazy grown,
And braces the languid sinew;
So, while we have voices and lungs to cheer,
And the winter frost before us,
Come chant to the king of the mortal year,
And thunder him out in chorus."

—E. E. Bowen.

"CHILL October." Again the authority of genius has fixed the epithet; and indeed, in those "climes beyond the solar road" where Millais stalked and sketched, it is painfully appropriate. Poetry is even less kind than painting to a beautiful month, for "wet October's torrent flood" is surely a libel; unless one happens to have lived in some very low-lying valley, during an exceptionally rainy autumn.

Quite different, and infinitely more cheerful,

are the visions which the word "October" calls up before my mental gaze. I was reared in the South Midlands, just where Bedfordshire lies ensconced between Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire; and, as I look down the vista which reaches back from to-day to youth and boyhood and childhood, October seems to stand out from the rest of the months with a brightness and a beauty all its own.

One of the best bits of landscape-painting in English prose is the chapter in which Tom Hughes conducts his readers to the top of White Horse Hill, and, bidding them look down on Berkshire and Wiltshire, describes the scenery and recalls the annals of the countryside. There is a feeling in the air to-day which suggests a similar excursion. Let us run down, one bright October morning, from Euston to Tring; and then, plunging into the recesses of the Chilterns, we will make our way to the secluded township from which Sir Walter borrowed his name of Ivanhoe; and then, if our legs and lungs and hearts are sound, we will climb to the top of the

far-seen Beacon, and surrender ourselves to the influences of sun and air and boundless space, and "the gorgeous but melancholy beauty of the sunlit autumnal landscape." Close at our feet is the tapering spire of Leighton Beaudesert; and beyond it a long, flat plain of mingled grass and arable, richly wooded, and dotted everywhere with church-towers, like knots in net-work. Twelve miles off lies the huge circumference of Woburn Park, marked out by its belt of woods from the surrounding stubbles; and, beyond, the rich, low vale of Bedford, melting away into the horizon like a misty sea. It is, as Tom Hughes said of the White Horse, "a place to open a man's soul, and make him prophesy, as he looks down on that great vale spread out as the garden of the Lord before him, and wave on wave of the mysterious downs behind."

But the prophetical tendency is rudely interrupted, and we are recalled to the realities of things by the sharp crack of a breechloader close by. Lord Brownlow is shooting the

covers of Ashridge Park, which, ever since my favourite Gazetteer was published (in 1773) has been "a fit habitation for those who delight in hunting and fowling"—especially fowling. I should like to join Lord Brownlow's party, for, though I have no aptitude for the sports of the barbarians, I should enjoy a leisurely walk through that glorious forest of beechwood, just now in flame-like splendour, towards the Bridgewater Obelisk, from whose summit I could catch the apex of Harrow Spire; for then I could fancy myself a schoolboy once again, in football-fields bright with sere and yellow leaves, rejoicing (only this quite secretly) that the "Goose Match" has brought the tyranny of cricket to an end.

But I must not attach myself to the Ashridge shooting-party, for I am bound in the opposite direction; and I must not spare more than a passing glance for the Vale of Aylesbury on my left, with Brill on the sky-line, and, beyond Brill, the Queen of Cities, where the blood-red creeper incarnadines the Founder's

Tower at Magdalen, "making the grey, one red," and a new generation of "young barbarians" is entering on its four years of play. *Breve gaudium.* It is a transient joy. Mr. Quiller-Couch, who has done for Oxford in verse what Matthew Arnold did in prose, has exactly caught the pensive beauty of the season in the stanza in which he thus accosts his Muse:—

> "Come, old limmer, the times grow colder:
> Leaves of the creeper redden and fall.
> Was it a hand, then, clapped my shoulder?
> —Only the wind by the chapel-wall.
> Dead leaves drift on the lute; so fold her
> Under thy faded shawl."

But perhaps this note of melancholy does not precisely accord with our present mood. Reminiscences are all very well in their way, but to-day I am "personally conducting" my fellow-tourist, and I must choose the spots where he can most cheerfully spend St. Luke's[1] too-brief summer.

We descend from the Beacon with cautious steps, for the hard-baked chalk, masked with

[1] October 18 is the Feast of St. Luke the Evangelist.

short brown turf, is slippery; and, once safe at the bottom, we plan our journey and choose our conveyance. What shall that conveyance be? Not legs—the way to be travelled is too long. Not a dog-cart, for our path across the meadows will lead us over stiles and through narrow bridle-gates. Not bicycles, for we shall never touch a turnpike-road except to cross it; and we shall have to traverse heath, and sand, and miry woodland ways. Not a motor—ten thousand times no!—for we are close to Markyate Street, where motorists are held in just abomination; and, besides, in two hours we shall have whirled through Bedfordshire, and never set eyes on its coy beauties. No, there is only one possible conveyance for our tour, and that is a horse—preferably, for we are Cockneys, a horse akin to the Convent-Mare in "Ivanhoe," "which cannot but be tractable, in respect that she draweth much of our winter firewood, and eateth no corn"—a horse which has learnt the vital accomplishment of standing

still when required to do so—a horse which will not shy when a cock-pheasant gets up under his nose, and will not try to bolt as soon as he feels turf under his feet. If my memory serves me, we shall find the sort of mount we want at Cheddington or Leighton; and now the world is all before us where to choose. For the next hour or two, we shall be really living, and drinking the delight of life through all our senses. The sky above us is a dome of turquoise; the grass under our feet is still green, and is beginning to be soft. The hedgerows and woodlands seem decked with amber and topaz and ruby, and the heavy drops of last night's dew flash like a diamond necklace. The south-west wind blows gently, and, to all the sweet smells of earth and vegetation, there is added, when we near the abodes of men, the winsome odour of brewing. If we are in luck, and have made a very early start, we may meet the Whaddon Chase hounds returning from cub-hunting, and what a rush of memories overtakes us then! Breakfast at seven in

"rat-catcher" costume; a horse made comfortably slack by autumnal languor; a plunge into a thick wood, cold and invigorating as the morning bath; endless gallops up and down deep green rides, or across commons where the heather still lingers, and the gorse is just in bloom. No fences; no risks; no imputations of cowardice; but only genial exercise in surroundings of Paradise. Such was cub-hunting, as I remember it; but I have just been trying to describe it, and need not essay the task again; though the remembrance prompts all sorts of plausible hypocrisies as we exchange salutations with Mr. Selby-Lowndes. "Plenty of the animal about, I hope?" "Ah! that's all right!" "The hedges must be fearfully blind still." "Pretty hard going in places, I suppose." "Well—King's Wood is always soft." "I always say there's no pleasure in riding when you come home with your boots not splashed"—and so on till we part company at Stock Grove, or Rushmere, or Heath, and cross Watling Street at Sheep Lane or Little Brickhill.

If we can spare an hour for Buckinghamshire, we shall find ourselves, at Bow Brickhill, in a boundless contiguity of Scotch fir, the pink bark giving off, under the joint influence of dew and sun, its fascinating smell: with picturesque scraps of heather and common, the blackberry bushes all red and yellow in the hedges, and the billberry bushes under foot. And then, just across the high road which leads to Northampton, we are in Bedfordshire again, in a genuine bit of virgin forest, where beech and birch and mountain ash display their strong rivalry of colour.

And now, emerging from the wood, and bending to the right, we reach the outskirts of Woburn Park, happily for us Cockneys intersected by rights of way which neither landlords nor agents

> "Nor all that is at enmity with joy
> Can utterly abolish or destroy."

Huge stretches of smooth turf, right and left of the main road, invite to prohibited gallops; and, as we reach the upper grounds, we find

ourselves in a glade which Doré might have drawn,

"With sheddings of the pining umbrage tinged,"

under a double avenue of tawny beech, where the red deer, and the great white Russian stags, stand shaking their insolent antlers at the intruder, in patches of brown bracken five foot high.

Now we are out of the Park, by Froxfield Gate, and a horseman who knows the country can lead you,

"By wily turns and desperate bounds,"

past the Cross Roads and the Warren, to the once-royal park of Ampthill, where oaks, too old for shipbuilding when the Protector commandeered them, have not yet put on the russet livery of autumn; and thence again, always by high meadow ways, with Crawley Brook (which once all but closed over the head of that loved Lycidas the Prince Regent) glittering under the hillside, to stately Wrest, where the Italian garden,

beneath an Italian sky, glows with all the jewels of the Apocalypse and all the hues of the rainbow.

So much for "Chill October"; but the day draws in, and the glory begins to fade; and the horses have travelled an unconscionable way since they left their stables. So we see them comfortably bestowed for the night at the wayside inn, and take the Midland train at Flitwick, close to the smallest and oldest Park in Bedfordshire. Within two hours I shall be sitting, dressed for dinner, in Pall Mall, toasting my toes by the club-fire, and thinking how nice it would be if one could be young again.

The waning months of "The Varying Year," as they are seen in a wooded country, were never better described than in a letter written by Dr. Arnold to his favourite pupil, Arthur Stanley, just returning to Oxford for the Autumn Term of 1836:—

"Some of my most delightful remembrances of Oxford and its neighbourhood are connected

with the scenery of the late autumn; Bagley Wood in its golden decline, and the green of the meadows reviving for a while under the influence of a Martinmas summer, and then fading finally off into its winter brown."

This season of the year is rich in "summers." St. Luke's we have just passed, and All Saints' lies ahead, and Martinmas beyond it. Here in London there is nothing to praise. The skies are grey and the distances are thick; the elms and planes are making haste to shed their yellow leaves; the limes are already bare to the bone; and the *ampelopsis* carpets the back-gardens with crimson waste. It is dark by five o'clock, and the first note of the muffin-bell reminds us that winter is at hand.

But October in the country is a very different story; and, to know what the month can be at its best, one should spend it, not on downs or moors or mountains, but amid the woodlands of Central England.

"Upon the Midlands now th' industrious Muse doth fall,
The shires which we the heart of England well may call."

And those "shires" still retain a good deal of the character which belonged to them when Michael Drayton described them three centuries ago. Certainly they have undergone some grievous disfigurements. The hideous railways cross and recross them, like the bars of a gigantic gridiron. Many an acre of virgin woodland has been "disafforested," and stolid oxen graze where once the buckhound chased the fallow-deer. Enclosure Acts have devastated the gorse-clad commons, and drained the soft marsh-lands where our fathers flushed the heron, and followed their favourite peregrine as she soared and swooped. "Venator," "Piscator," and "Auceps" were all three good fellows, and I should have enjoyed their company on a fine October morning in the meadows by the Lea or in the Thatched House at Hoddesdon; but "Auceps" is the one whose favourite sport I should have wished to share:—

"Ne is there hawk which mantleth on her perch,
Whether high towering or accousting low,
But I the measure of her flight doe search,
And all her prey and all her diet know."

Boastfulness is permitted to poets, and to Spenser among the rest; but I too know something, though not much, about the noble science of Falconry. It was practised in the district which I am going to describe till well into the nineteenth century; and I have tasted its delights, by the aid of imagination, in "The Abbot" and "Holmby House" and "Bracebridge Hall." But, though the advance of that civilization which we learned from Ruskin to detest has done something to disfigure the English Midlands, it has not wholly succeeded, and October in Bedfordshire, or Buckinghamshire, or Northamptonshire, or Warwickshire can still show life and nature in very agreeable aspects.

To-day, again taking the train from Euston, let us pursue our journey as far as Bletchley. There, on the right, we catch what Matthew Arnold called "the strong, turbulent roll of the hills," with a village church-tower perched on the very edge that overlooks the plain, and behind it a vast expanse of pine-wood, lovely alike to eye and nostril, and reminding

one at every step of the similar scenery which Kingsley loved so well:—

> "The climb homeward, by park and by moorland,
> And through the fir-forest again,
> While the south-west wind roars in the gloaming
> Like an ocean of seething champagne."

If we penetrate these dark recesses and take our way for a couple of miles, we shall emerge in forest-land of a totally different character —thick undergrowths, and loamy soil, and yellowing birches striving with scarlet rowans in glorious conflict; while the oaks still stand defying the assault of time, and scorning to show the faintest tinge of "sere and yellow" in their vesture of dark green.

But we must not linger in Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire, for Northamptonshire claims us; and Northamptonshire, in spite of high farming, and branch-railways, and speculative builders, and similar horrors, is still a land of Forests. There is Rockingham Forest, in which the red deer still roam, and which stretches "in an almost unbroken chain of woodland for a distance of twenty miles."

There is Whittlebury Forest, which runs across the southern border of the country for eleven miles, and forms part of the inheritance which an extremely Merry Monarch bestowed on the ducal son of Barbara Villiers. There is Salcey Forest, famous for its race of forest-bred ponies, narrow-backed and blood-like; and Yardley Chace, where William Cowper came wandering disconsolate from the neighbouring shades of Weston Underwood and wrote his noble lines on Yardley Oak:—

> "Could a mind, imbued
> With truth from Heaven, created thing adore,
> I might with reverence kneel and worship thee."

But it is October, and turning "chill"; and the days begin to draw in, and we are far from home; and yet I feel no hurry to return. In London, when we wake to-morrow, we shall find winter, just one degree more cheerless and unkempt than we left it this morning. But here, in the woodlands of Mid-England, we are enjoying the last weeks of a glorious summer. October is the "Painter's Month" indeed; Gamboge and Indian Yellow and

Burnt Sienna will apply the prevailing tints, but they must be heightened here and there by vermilion for the Mountain Ash and lake for the Virginian Creeper and cobalt for the sky.

Though October is a month of exquisite beauty, it is wholly free from languor and listlessness and *dolce far niente*. It does not invite to repose on grass and heather, nor encourage us to lie supine and watch the sailing clouds through the sun-pierced roof of the "nemorous temple." Its peculiar charm is that its very air breathes energy and inspires even the lazy and the lethargic to bestir themselves, and inflate their lungs, and "lift up their eyes unto the hills from whence cometh their strength."

I must not close this chapter without remembering that October is pre-eminently the month of Harvest Homes; and the observance of Harvest links us English folk of the twentieth century to the religion of a distan clime and a very different climate.

The Feast of Tabernacles was the Harvest Home of Israel. Lord Beaconsfield, who, though he had adopted Christianity, never repudiated Judaism, described the rite, as performed by his brother-Israelites, in a vivid passage of perhaps his least-read book :—

"The vineyards of Israel have ceased to exist, but the eternal law enjoins the Children of Israel still to celebrate the vintage. A race that persists in celebrating their vintage, though they have no fruits to gather, will regain their vineyards. What sublime inexorability in the law! But what indomitable spirit in the people! Conceive a being born and bred in the purlieus of Houndsditch or the Minories, living amid fogs and filth, occupied with the meanest toil, bargaining for frippery, speculating in usury—conceive such a being, an object to you of prejudice, dislike, disgust, probably hatred. The season arrives, and the mind and heart of that being are filled with images and passions that have ranked in all ages among the most beautiful and the most genial of human experience; filled with

a subject the most vivid, the most graceful, the most joyous, and the most exuberant; a subject which has inspired poets, and which has made gods; the harvest of the grape in the native regions of the vine. The poor Israelite goes early to some Whitechapel market, purchases some willow boughs, hastens home, cleans out the yard of his miserable tenement, builds his bower, decks it with the finest fruits and flowers which he can procure—the myrtle and the citron never forgotten—and hangs its roof with variegated lamps. After the service of the synagogue, he sups late with his wife and his children in the open air, as if he were in the pleasant villages of Galilee, beneath its sweet and starry sky. He pronounces the Hebrew blessing on the Hebrew meal, breaking and distributing the bread, and sanctifying with a preliminary prayer the goblet of wine he holds—the very ceremony which the Divine Prince of Israel, nearly two thousand years ago, adopted at the most memorable of all repasts, and eternally invested with Eucharistic grace."

It is perhaps remarkable that, as the Christian

Church accepted and adapted so many of the rites which were common to Paganism and to Judaism, she did not earlier and more authoritatively institute a Christian Feast of Harvest. Such a Feast would seem to be one of those observances of national religion which no ecclesiastical system would leave out of account; and, as a matter of fact, before very long it forced its way at least into local and partial observance. The 1st of August is marked in our English Kalendar as "Lammas-day," and commentators tell us that "the observation of this day as a Feast of Thanksgiving for the first-fruits of the corn dates from Saxon times. It was called *Hlaf-Mæsse*, or Loaf-Mass, from the practice of offering at Mass bread made from the new corn. If this be true etymology and history, our Saxon forefathers celebrated their Harvest Festival on the 1st of August; but the alteration of the Kalendar, and possibly also some modifications of the English climate, made the first of the month, as we now reckon it, a premature and unseasonable moment for a Harvest Festival. It is hazardous to rejoice

over a crop not yet garnered. As the Prayer-book contained no special service for the day, no liturgical rule was broken by altering the date; and so it came about, all over England, that Harvest Home was celebrated when the Harvest was actually completed—an arrangement which even Dryasdust must admit to be concordant with common sense.

It must be confessed that the strictly religious element soon vanished out of the observance. That delightfully natural and easy way of blending the Secular with the Sacred, which was the most gracious characteristic of mediæval life, was ousted by the grim and anti-social spirit of an inhuman Puritanism. An earlier generation had instinctively regarded the Holy Mass as beginning and hallowing a day's festivity, and thought of the social meal as the natural and befitting complement of the morning's rite. The Church's worship had, as Newman says, "the lightness and airiness of a spirit," and it refined and spiritualized, though it did not the least contemn, the more material enjoyments of a day dedicated to rejoicing. But

now all that was changed. The hallowed names of Christmas and Michaelmas still lingered in the Kalendar, and Martinmas and Lammas in the common speech of men; but they survived only as memorials of a time when the Mass had been the characteristic action of a social festival. The spirit which had made it so had vanished with the rite, and had left behind it only the too, too solid flesh of English merry-making. And English merry-making, when divorced from religion, is apt to be not only solid but extremely gross.

Such, according to all tradition, was the English observance of Harvest Home for at least three centuries. And then the Oxford Movement, with its signal power of breathing fresh significance into ancient forms and spiritualizing what had been material and commonplace, saw an opportunity for fresh conquests in the traditional uses of Harvest Home. It was in 1857 that Archdeacon Denison introduced at East Brent, near Taunton, the new and better mode of celebrating the Feast of

Harvest. "It had long appeared to me," he wrote, "that we wanted recognized holidays for the working men, women, and children; and this was a step in that direction specially recommended by one of its leading features—that it was not only a holiday for all classes alike, but a holiday which all classes kept and enjoyed in close contact one with another." The following was the order of the reconstructed Feast. As in the "Merry England" of old time the day began with religion, so now Mattins was said at 7.30 A.M. The Holy Communion—the "Mass" of our forefathers—was celebrated at 8 and again at 9. A Special Service of Thanksgiving for the Crops was performed at 11.30, and followed by a short sermon on the subject of the day. Then all the congregation adjourned to a sunny knoll adjoining the churchyard, where a substantial dinner, provided by the liberality of the farmers and other well-to-do inhabitants, was spread for all and sundry. There were the usual concomitants of an English feast, in the shape of moderate ale and abundant

tobacco and superabundant after-dinner oratory, and at six the whole company returned to the church, and a cheerful Evensong closed the day.

The example set by Archdeacon Denison soon spread, with such modifications as place and circumstances suggested, all over the country. In order to supply the lack of suitable hymnody, Dean Alford wrote his popular stanzas beginning—

> "Come, ye thankful people, come,
> Raise the song of Harvest Home!"

Alike in town and country, in "High Church" parishes and Low, north and south, east and west, human hearts responded to an observance which belongs to the immemorial and universal religion of mankind, and the Harvest Festival became to modern Englishmen what the Feast of Tabernacles was to the Israelites of old. While the observance of the Feast thus diffused itself, in its native place it flourished with increasing vigour. Its evergreen founder, who kept in a singular degree the boy's heart in

an old man's frame, thus described the secular part of the Feast as he celebrated it in 1883:—

"From early morning Tuesday up to to-day, Saturday, weather perfect, sun, air; no rain or wind. Large company. Wonderful Punch, steam merry-go-round, fortune-telling, various other amusements—football, &c. Everybody highly pleased. Two grand balls, 1000 people in tent on Tuesday night, 500 Wednesday night; had food enough over from Feast on Tuesday for poor parishioners' second meal on Wednesday. Very fine music, dressing in best taste, manners and general demeanour perfect; no doubt an admirable institution; should be witnessed to be comprehended."

Not many Harvest Festivals, I should fear, can compare with the exuberance of East Brent; but then not many Archdeacons, or men of any class, can compare with George Anthony Denison in the faculty of doing with his might whatever his hand found to do.

Here in London the Harvest Festival is probably the most popular of all the Church's observances. In the poorer quarters, people

who never cross the threshold of a church at Christmas or Easter, throng every available inch of space, and gaze with delight on the gathered flowers and fruits and sheaves, and sing the hymns of Harvest Home with an astonishing fervour. It is true that stiff liturgiologists set their faces against all this irregular enthusiasm for an unauthorized festival, and satirical writers are never tired of poking fun at the Feast of the Pumpkin and the spiritual uses of the Big Loaf. But from these critics I entirely dissociate myself. To my mind there is something infinitely touching in the devotion of a smoke-dried and toil-worn population to the sights and sounds which remind them of the country, where perhaps their childhood was passed, or where they have seen their only glimpses of Eden in brief holidays snatched, once and again, from a monotony of grind and grime. For us "in populous cities pent" whatever speaks of the country, speaks of Heaven.

October, 1908, will be long remembered on

account of its extraordinary warmth, and of the vast crowds which that warmth attracted to the Franco-British Exhibition. The provinces poured into London, and mingled quaintly, but not unpleasantly, with the representatives of all hues and races and tongues who thronged, night after night, the illuminated parterres and sparkling courts of the White City.

A high-sniffing critic thus dissociated himself from the universal eulogy:—

"I suppose that most visitors are greatly impressed by the way in which the Exhibition is illuminated at night. Certainly the thousands of electric lights outlining the buildings, the reflections in the water, the effects produced by coloured lights behind the waterfall, are all, in their way, very wonderful. Yet there is something of vulgar display about all this, and the bright and stately October moon seemed to be looking down upon it all with a smile of conscious superiority, not unmixed with scorn for the childishness of the children of men!"

I confess that I am one of the humble crowd who thought the whole effect extremely pretty, and Tennyson seems to have painted it by prevision—

> "Not more content,
> He told me, lives in any crowd,
> When all is gay with lamps, and loud
> With sport and song, in booth and tent,
>
> Imperial halls, or open plain;
> And wheels the circled dance, and breaks
> The rocket molten into flakes
> Of crimson or in emerald rain."

NOVEMBER

"Red o'er the forest peers the setting sun,
The line of yellow light dies fast away
That crown'd the eastern copse; and chill and dun
Falls on the moor the brief November day."
—THE CHRISTIAN YEAR.

NOTHING, I think, except theological prejudice (which, in the world's history, has accounted for much), can account for the omission of John Keble from the series of "English Men of Letters." It is perfectly true that some of his verse is perfunctory, and it is easy enough to make fun of perfunctory verse. To write a poem for each Sunday in the year, for each "Red Letter Day," for the Sacraments and the Occasional Offices, and for the four political Holy-Days, was a task which might have exhausted even the versatility of him whom Jonson called "The Myriad-Minded Man." But, when Keble is writing not by contract but

by inspiration, surrendering himself to the guidance of his own particular genius, and conveying, through the medium of words, the sights and sounds and sensations of Nature, I submit that he is worthy to be ranked with Wordsworth and Arnold. When he is describing the quiet beauty of streams and meadows and cottage-flowers, we feel that his heart is in his boyhood's home among the Cotswolds, or is retracing the steps of his duteous youth by the Isis or the Cherwell. The verse at the head of this chapter calls us to rougher scenery; and reminds us that for forty years he plied his daily task of pastoral care among the "moors" and "forests" of Hampshire. If there is a verse in the language which more perfectly describes a wintry sunset before the trees are bare, I do not know it.

> "Now the tir'd hunter winds a parting note,
> And Echo bids good-night from every glade;
> Yet wait awhile, and see the calm leaves float
> Each to his rest beneath their parent shade."

The tir'd hunter. The words interrupt our reverie, and suggest a train of thought

altogether inconsistent with "calm decay" and pensive musing.

"But hush! the upland hath a sudden loss
Of quiet!—Look adown the dusk hillside,
A troop of Oxford hunters going home,
As in old days, jovial and talking, ride,
From hunting with the Berkshire hounds they come."

For the First of November carries with it all sorts of associations quite distinct from, though not hostile to, its religious significance. "Hallow E'en," which brings "cantrips" to the Scotsman, brings Fox-hunting to the Englishman; and even those who most loyally recognize the religious claims of All Saints' Day may not inconsistently remember that it is also the first day of real Hunting. I once knew an Evangelical clergyman who, conscious of being a fine horseman, used to say, "Oh! how I should like to hunt, if I could hunt with a field of saints!" I cannot profess that I know a country where that desire could have been completely gratified; but I have known individual saints to whom hunting was the keenest of earthly delights, and who, by carrying with them into their

favourite amusement their own high standard of purity and refinement, rendered conspicuous service to the faith which they professed. But this is a digression from All Saints' Day.[1]

Shakespeare knew All Saints' Day by its mediæval name of Hallowmas. But English people of the present day, taught by three centuries and a half of the English Prayer-book, speak rather of All Saints' Day and All Saints' Eve. Though the Feast itself is full of the most inspiring associations, for us Southrons the Eve has no special significance; but north of the Tweed it was long held in peculiar reverence and even awe. Sir Walter Scott, in spite of his Presbyterian surroundings, clung with romantic tenderness to superstitions which had their root in the Catholic past of Scotland; and he turned the special attribute of Hallow E'en to excellent account in the opening chapters of "The Monastery." He is careful to note that it was "on the last day of October" that the Lady of Avenel, fleeing

[1] Patris reverendi haud immemor scribebam.

with her babe in her arms from her plundered castle, set forth on her melancholy pilgrimage to the Tower of Glendearg. "Oh, who could have believed that the head which a few years since was cradled amongst so many rejoicing friends may perhaps this night seek a cover in vain!" That the little band of pilgrims was rescued from imminent peril of submersion in the black and treacherous bogs, by the guidance of a White Lady whom only the child and the pony saw, might seem mysterious enough; but the explanation was supplied by the faithful Tibby, who murmured in her husband's ear, "All Hallow Eve"; and three years later, when the same fateful Eve came round, and Mary Avenel saw, without recognizing it, her father's wraith, the same explanation soothed Dame Glendinning's fears of "ghaists and gyre carlins." "Touching the bairn, it's weel kenned she was born on Hallowe'en, and they that are born on Hallowe'en whiles see mair than ither folk."

No such claim, I believe, is advanced by English people who are born on the 31st of

October; nor do we mark the night by indulgence in such unhallowed "cantrips" as Father Nicholas, the cellarer of Kennaquhair, played, over the "nuts and brown beer," for the discomfiture of Elspeth Brydone.

But, though we pay no heed to All Saints' Eve, All Saints' Day is one of the few ecclesiastical festivals which are widely and devoutly observed. It is, indeed, of no high antiquity, but it has won its way to general acceptance because it ministers to a primary instinct of human nature. It seems to have originated at Rome in the seventh century, when the Pantheon was consecrated as a Christian church under the name of the Blessed Virgin Mary and All Martyrs. The consecration is said to have taken place on the 1st of November, A.D. 608; and the day, continuously observed in the Western Church, has gradually acquired its wider significance as the Feast of All the Holy Dead.

Keble, whose observation of nature never failed, drew a pleasant picture of All Saints' weather:—

"Why blow'st thou not, thou wintry wind,
Now every leaf is brown and sere,
And idly droops, to thee resigned,
The fading chaplet of the year?

Yet wears the pure aërial sky
Her summer veil, half drawn on high,
Of silvery haze; and dark and still
The shadows sleep on every slanting hill."

That extraordinary stillness which Keble noted as the characteristic of nature at this precise moment of the year has made "All Saints' Summer" a household word on both sides of the Atlantic.

"Harvests were gathered in; and wild with the winds of September
Wrestled the trees of the forest, as Jacob of old with the angel.
Such was the advent of autumn. Then follows that beautiful season
Called by the pious Acadian peasants the Summer of All Saints.
Filled was the air with a dreamy and magical light; and the landscape
Lay as if new-created in all the freshness of childhood."

These still, calm days of early November, supervening on storms and gales and "wet October's torrent flood," seem to justify the liturgical instinct which placed the Feast of All

Saints on the first of the month, and thus sought to blend the sights and sounds of decaying nature with "the beauty, the languor, and the dignity of death—calm contemplation and majestic pain."

But, while we pay all due respect to the Feast of All Saints, we ought not to forget that the 2nd of November is for the greater part of the Western Church a day not less momentous. All Souls' Day (of which the Reformation robbed us) is an even more human observance than All Saints' Day. We give the widest possible interpretation to the title of "Saint," and we hold in reverent honour not only the Apostles who established the Kingdom, and the Evangelists who taught the world; the Martyrs who flared in Nero's tar-barrels, and the Anchorites who made the desert blossom with their prayers; but the whole goodly company of those who in all ages and in every land have conspicuously served the great causes of Righteousness and Mercy. Still, interpret it as widely as we may, the title of Saint conveys some suggestion of illustrious devotion and

supereminent service. It is fitting that the Saints should have their day, and that it should be a high day of the Christian Kalendar. But the inhumanity of Puritanism did grievous wrong when it abolished the more comprehensive observance of All Souls' Day. No stouter Protestant than Thomas Arnold ever preached from an English pulpit, and on the 2nd of November, 1834, in the chapel of Rugby School, he averred that "All Souls' Day, or the Day of the Dead, is capable of being made a truly Christian solemnity, no less than the day of All Saints." To my mind, more so; for the Saints have, in a sense, their reward. They were called to conspicuous sorrows, but they reaped a not less conspicuous glory. Their names will live as long as the Church lasts; and, in regions far beyond the precincts of the Church and of all organized religion, they will be held in honour as exemplars of unworldly courage, and workers, though perhaps they knew it not, for the social service of humanity.

I plead for the Souls that were not Saints—

to whom no special gifts were allotted; who were called to no high prerogatives of martyrdom or confessorships; men of like passions with ourselves; as foolish, as fallible, as sorely tempted, as powerless to resist. Their virtues and their defects, their victories and their falls, their wrestlings with the darkness, their struggles towards the light—were never known, or known only to the nearest few; and the last traces of them have long since "mixed with the ages that have gone before us, as the broad black raindrops mingle with the waste of waters, making a trifling and momentary eddy, and then are lost for ever." It is these whom All Souls' Day bids us commemorate. We look back, each one of us, down the vista of our own past lives, and recall the faces of associates with whom we have worked and played and lived; who bore no outward signs of Saintship, and from whose companionship conscience may even have forced us to separate ourselves. They are dead and gone. They have no proper place in the celebration of All Saints' Day; but All Souls' Day is their own.

It reminds us of the feebleness and fallibility of the judgment by which we sought to assay them; and humiliates us with the wholesome thought that, if all the truth were known, it is we, and not they, who have most need to crave oblivion.

And what is true of individual retrospects is surely not less true of the backward-sweeping view which surveys the entire history of the human race. We ourselves, "the latest seed of time," have been born into what we, as a general rule, regard as an exceptionally favoured age — blessed not so much by the material boons of science as by a quickened conscience and a passion for the truth. We look back to the recorded beginnings of the family from which we spring—to the sickening cruelty which darkened the dawn of human society—to the "clench'd antagonisms" through which Truth and Light have had to win their way to a very partial victory—to the weltering bloodshed and rapine of the Middle Age—

"The heavens all gloom, the wearied earth all crime."

And, while we look, All Souls' Day opportunely reminds us that the perpetrators of these enormous wrongs were men of our own flesh and blood; and checks the vainglorious condemnation which springs so readily to modern lips. The human conscience has developed with a painful and a humiliating slowness; and, however sternly we may judge the past, we must admit, for ourselves, abundant unfaithfulness to clearer light. A common Humanity has made all men brothers; and a common Redemption has taught us to pity, to pardon, and to hope.

"Cold would the winter be, for thick was the fur of the foxes;
Such was the advent of autumn. Then followed that beautiful season,
Called by the pious Acadian peasants the summer of All Saints."

Acadia is Nova Scotia; and I am not aware that in the regions of the Quorn and the Pytchley men calculate the chances of frost by examining the integument of the foxes which they have killed towards the end of cub-hunting. But the "beautiful season," "the summer of All

Saints," is common to Acadia and to England. The air is as soft as milk, and curiously still. The sky, though grey, is not gloomy. No breeze ruffles the yellow leaves, but they fall as of their own accord. The storm and turbulence of winter seem to have no place in the scheme of the universe. All life appears to be wrapt for the moment in an enchanted sleep; and from that sleep we shall wake to the full ecstasy of Hunting.

And now it behoves the Cockney to be careful. A warning voice reaches me from the inspired page of *Happy Thoughts*. "They come back, the hare first. I see him, and cut at him with my whip. Old gentleman very angry. I try to laugh it off. With the dogs I ride through the gate. Capital fun. The hare is caught in a ditch by the road-side. Old gentleman still angry. I am told he is one of the old school of sportsmen, who, I suppose, don't cut at hares with a whip. *Happy Thought*—I'm in at the death. Say 'Tally ho!' and call for the brush. Milburd laughs, and says he supposes I want a 'Hare Brush.'"

The "old school of sportsmen" dominated by tender youth; I still recall the withering contempt bestowed on the unwary Londoner who said "dogs" for "hounds"; and John Bright's offence of pronouncing Pytchley as though it were written Pitchley is still, I believe, unexpiated. Warned by these and similar disasters, I will leave the description of the run to more experienced hands; but even a Cockney may in earlier life have seen a Meet; and, if he has, he has seen one of the most delightful and typical of English scenes.

Myself a student of costume—a devotee of military gauds and official frippery, and the ritualistic variations of the judicial wardrobe, and the stately grace of copes and chasubles—I yet contend that a red coat, not too newly red, with good leathers and top-boots, and a neatly-tied white scarf, is the most becoming costume which an Englishman can wear. Further, I believe that a man, if only he be moderately well-shaped, looks his best on a horse: and as to a woman—well, I fell in love with Die Vernon on the

day when first we met, and I have loved her ever since.

I have borrowed Sir Walter's portrait of "Die," and incorporated it in my sketch of Cub-hunting in September, so there can be no need to reproduce it. Only let the reader recall the prettiest girl he ever saw, and dress her in a trim habit, and mount her on "Phœbe," or "Skylark," or "Satanella," or any other hunter from the stables of Fiction, and place her in appropriate surroundings. Picture an English country-house—Elizabethan or Jacobean for choice; for red brick, mellowed by age and lichen, best blends with our English skies. Place it on the flat surface of a well-wooded park, where the deer are retreating in alarm to the protection of the distant groves—

> "All around, the wild November whistling
> Through the beech's dome of burning red,
> And the Autumn sprinkling penitential
> Dust and ashes on the chestnut's head."

People the lawn with Die Vernons, and surround them with a cohort of the best-looking men you know, on the best hunters which Leicestershire or Northamptonshire can

produce; and introduce into your foreground the "dappled darlings," which Kingsley loved, and group them round the Master and the servants of the pack; and surround the whole with a joyous company of cheerful neighbours, some on horses, and some on ponies, and some on foot; some on bicycles, some in traps, and some on motors; and you realize, as a Cockney can never realize it, the geniality and brotherliness of a rural neighbourhood.

I can say Surtees's books by heart. I have read every page of Whyte-Melville. I was brought up on Delmé-Radcliffe's "Noble Science." I could point to the very spot where the Whissendine closed over Dick Christian, and, when some one exclaimed that he would be drowned, "the pace was too good to enquire." I know—what very few people do—an excellent description of hunting in "The Comedy of a Country House," and another in "Breakers Ahead." But to my mind the most fascinating description of a run is given by Charles Kingsley at the beginning of "Yeast"—

"The walk became a trot, the trot a canter.

Then a faint melancholy shout at a distance, answered by a 'Stole away!' from the fields; a doleful 'toot!' of the horn; the dull thunder of many horse-hoofs rolling along the further woodside. Then red coats, flashing like sparks of fire across the grey gap of mist at the river's mouth; then a whipper-in, bringing up a belated hound, burst into the pathway, smashing and plunging, with shut eyes, through ash-saplings and hassock grass; then a fat farmer sedulously pounding through the mud was overtaken and bespattered in spite of all his struggles, until the line streamed out into the wide rushy pasture, starting up peewits and curlews as horsemen poured in from every side, and cunning old farmers rode off at inexplicable angles to some well-known haunts of Pug; and right ahead, chiming and clanging sweet madness, the dappled pack glanced and wavered through the veil of soft grey mist. . . . On and on—down the wind and down the vale, and the canter became a gallop, and the gallop a long straining stride, and a hundred horse-hoofs crackled like flame among

the stubbles, and thundered fetlock-deep along the heavy meadows; and every fence thinned the cavalcade, till the madness began to stir all bloods, and with grim, earnest, silent faces the initiated few settled themselves to their work, till the rolling grass lands spread out into flat, black, open fallows, crossed with grassy baulks, and here and there a long melancholy line of tall elms, while before them the high chalk ranges gleamed above the mist like a vast wall of emerald enamelled with snow, and the winding river glittering at their feet. They crossed the stream, passed the Priory shrubberies, leapt the gate into the Park, and then on and upward, lulled by the unseen Ariel's music before them . . . Presently a brown speck was seen to fleet rapidly up the opposite hill, and a gay view-halloo burst from the Colonel at his side. But for Lancelot the chase lost its charm the moment the quarry was seen. Then vanished that mysterious delight of pursuing an invisible object which gives to hunting and fishing their unutterable and almost spiritual charm; which made

Shakespeare a nightly poacher, and Davy and Chantrey the patriarchs of fly-fishing."

If it were not for Hunting, November in the country would, I think, be rather a cheerless month. As I write, there comes back upon the ear of memory the echo of a wonderful sermon preached by Dr. Liddon before the University of Oxford on the 10th of November, 1878. "As a man passes into middle life, or beyond it, Autumn, it has been said, whispers more to his soul than any other season of the natural year. It is not difficult to see why this should be, if it be, the case. The few hours of sunlight, the generally beclouded sky, the cold damp atmosphere, the sense of advancing collapse and dissolution which the withered and decaying leaf everywhere suggests, and the knowledge that, as the days succeed each other, the season will pass into a yet deeper gloom—these features of November dispose us to think of the close of human life, and of the world which follows it. And the Church, with her fine practical

instinct, seemed to have made the most of such characteristics of the month as these, by placing at its commencement the Festival which guides our thoughts upwards to the home of all the Saints in glory, and by closing it with Advent Sunday—that yearly anticipation of the great Day of Doom, when all that belongs to the present order of things here below will finally pass away."

Thus the Christian preacher; and his sense of "collapse and dissolution" seem equally to oppress the Pantheistic poet:—

"A spirit haunts the year's last hours
Dwelling amid these yellowing bowers:
To himself he talks;
For at eventide, listening earnestly,
At his work you may hear his sob and sigh
In the walks;
Earthward he boweth the heavy stalks
Of the mouldering flowers:
Heavily hangs the broad sunflower
Over its grave i' the earth so chilly;
Heavily hangs the hollyhock,
Heavily hangs the tiger-lily.

The air is damp, and hush'd, and close,
As a sick man's room when he taketh repose
An hour before death;
My very heart faints and my whole soul grieves
At the moist rich smell of the rotting leaves,

And the breath
Of the fading edges of box beneath,
And the last year's rose.
Heavily hangs the broad sunflower
Over its grave i' the earth so chilly;
Heavily hangs the hollyhock,
Heavily hangs the tiger-lily."

But I should be untrue to the gathered experience of maturer age, if I permitted these dismal reflections, whether of a Preacher or of a Poet, to close my study of November.

St. Martin, whose Feast approaches, is a very attractive saint. Constrained by a law of compulsory service to enter the army of the Emperor Constantine in his fifteenth year, he "nobly gave away in alms the whole of his pay except what he required for his subsistence." In view of this remarkable generosity, one can only surmise that conscripts under the Roman Empire were better paid than their congeners in modern France or Germany; and there is little reason to suppose that compulsory service in England, as imagined by the Jingo Press, would be followed by similar results in the way of social charity. The *Acta Sanctorum* records no

pleasanter story than that of Martin, a bright, brave soldier of eighteen, dividing his military cloak with his sword, and giving half to the shivering beggars at the gate of Amiens. Two years later he applied for his discharge, and, being unjustly reproached with cowardice, he volunteered to fling himself unarmed upon the spears of the advancing foe, relying only on the protection of the Cross which his Imperial Master had inscribed on the victorious standards of the Roman Empire. "Peace ensuing, he was released from further service;" and now, at length set free to follow the bent of his true vocation, he became in turn a hermit, a monk, a priest, and a bishop; but it is as the brave and tender-hearted soldier that he lives in sacred art and literature, and as such we think of him when Martinmas comes round.

We have seen in an earlier chapter Dr. Arnold's description of the green of the meadows, reviving for a while under the influence of a Martinmas Summer, and then fading finally off into its winter brown. It

is pleasant to find that a writer so wholly emancipated from antiquarian superstitions recognized the Feast of the Soldier-Saint. For him, as for Shakespeare, "Saint Martin's Summer" was a synonym for "halcyon days"; and certainly that spell of belated warmth and sunshine which generally surrounds the Saint's death-day—November 11—is nowhere more welcome or more enjoyable than where it conquers the chilly mists of the Isis and the Cherwell, and lingers, for all too brief a season, on "pinnacled St. Mary's" and the crown of Magdalen Tower.

The charms of Oxford in her summer dress have been described by writers as graphic and as various as Wordsworth, Scott, and Macaulay; Tom Hughes and Henry Kingsley; J. H. Shorthouse and Mrs. Humphry Ward. To praise Oxford as she appears in autumn and winter has been the work of other, and fewer, but not less worthy, hands. Somehow, one does not naturally turn to Dr. Arnold for gems of natural description; and yet, in the passage which I have just

quoted, he describes the changing aspect of the landscape round Oxford, when autumn is fading into winter, with a vivid accuracy which even the beloved and gifted pupil whom he was addressing could scarcely have surpassed.

To his brother-Fellow John Keble, as completely at one with him in the love of Oxford and of Nature as he was opposed in politics and religion, the aspect of the city surrounded by the waters of the flooded Isis seemed a warning parable. It was the momentous winter of 1832. What the Duke of Wellington called "a Revolution by due course of law" had just been consummated. Change and upheaval and revolt were everywhere, and the triumphant party of Reform had marked the Universities as the object of their next attack. The material Oxford, surrounded but not submerged, seemed an image of the spiritual Oxford, threatened on all hands, but still safe as long as she looked upward for deliverance.

"The flood is round thee, but thy towers as yet
Are safe, and, clear as by a summer's sea,
Pierce the calm morning mist, serene and free,
To point in silence heavenward!"

Five-and-thirty years later this sonnet of Keble was used with excellent effect when the foundation-stone of the College which bears his name was laid. Dr. Pusey had been speaking, with characteristic courage, of the various enemies by whom Oxford was "beleaguered," and he reminded his hearers that "the writer of the 'Christian Year,' with presaging mind, as he viewed Oxford from Bagley, encircled by the overflowing waters," said that her towers still were safe, "yet safe, as he thought and felt, only by prayer."

Frederick Faber, though absurdly disparaged by the high-sniffing school of critics, has a wide and just reputation as a hymn-writer; but few people recognize him as a poet. Yet a poet he surely was, and his "Oxford in Winter" has the double charm of melody and truthfulness :—

"City of wildest sunsets, which do pile
Their dark-red castles on the woody brow!
Fair as thou art in summer's moonlight smile,
There are a hundred cities fair as thou.
But still with thee alone, all seasons round,
Beauty and change in their own right abound.

Coy city, that dost swathe thy summer self
In willow lines and elmy avenue,
Each winter comes, and brings some hidden pelf,
Buttress, or cross, or gable out to view;
While this thin sunlight frugal lustre sheds
On the straight streams and yellow osier-beds."

Matthew Arnold, who inherited his father's love of Oxford and suffused it with a poet's imagination, praised her in memorable prose and haunting verse. He painted her in every aspect of her varying beauty, but never more delicately than when "the winter-eve was warm" at Martinmas:—

"Humid the air! leafless, yet soft as spring,
The tender purple spray on copse and briers!
And the sweet city, with her dreamy spires,
She needs not June for beauty's heightening."

That is a perfect picture of St. Martin's Summer. And then again the landscape changes, as the too-brief season ebbs, and yields place to colder airs:—

"Have I not pass'd thee on the wooden bridge?
Wrapt in thy cloak and battling with the snow,
Thy face toward Hincksey and its wintry ridge?
And thou hast climbed the hill,
And gained the white brow of the Cumner range;
And turned to watch, while thick the snowflakes fall,
The line of festal light in Christ Church hall."

Not all the literary landscape-painters who ever worked in English prose—not Scott and Macaulay and Ruskin rolled into one—could paint so perfect a picture of Oxford, seen on a winter's evening from the neighbouring uplands, as is conveyed in those ten magically-assorted syllables—

"The line of festal light in Christ Church hall."

Dr. Arnold is responsible for having led my thoughts to Oxford, and I must now return to a less romantic city. Even here in London St. Martin's Summer makes its presence felt.

"Red o'er the forest peers the setting sun,"

though "the forest" is nothing more primæval than Kensington Gardens.

"In this lone, open glade I lie,
Screen'd by deep boughs on either hand;
And at its end, to stay the eye,
Those black-crowned, red-boled pine-trees stand."

The days are short; the air is soft—

"The line of yellow light dies fast away,"

as the sun goes down in splendour behind the Serpentine Bridge.

It is time to be turning homeward, and to recognize, with pleasurable emotions, "the line of festal light" in the Club-windows of Pall Mall. The town is delightfully full—not too full for social ease, yet full enough to make boredom and depression impossible. Hospitality, of an easy and informal type, is the order of the day. The vivacious St. Aldegonde, when abusing the too-elaborate fare of Muriel Towers, exactly hit the gastronomic note of Martinmas. "What I want in November is a slice of cod and a beef-steak, and by Jove, I never can get them. I am obliged to come to town. It is no joke to have to travel three hundred miles for a slice of cod and a beef-steak." Fortunately a good many people feel themselves under a similar necessity, and Martinmas is just about the period when they flock to London in search of whatever delights answer, in their economy, to St. Aldegonde's cod and beefsteak. It is one of the most enjoyable seasons of the social year, and perhaps all the more so because it is so brief. Genial St. Martin makes no long stay. St. Hugh,

who succeeds him in the Kalendar, wears quite a different visage. St. Aldegonde will soon be returning to his Castle in the North; the fogs of December are impending; and, in the not remote distance, the Christmas Holidays threaten the destruction of domestic peace. So we will make the most of St. Martin's Summer while it lasts,

"Nor with to-morrow's clouds o'ercast our hearts to-day!"

DECEMBER

"Cheerful as soaring lark, and mild
As evening blackbird's full-ton'd lay,
When the relenting sun has smil'd
Bright through a whole December day."
—THE CHRISTIAN YEAR.

SUCH a "December day" as the poet here describes must be acknowledged to be a rarity; but, when it occurs, there is nothing more delicious. A few such days seem to be associated in memory with the opening week of the Christmas Holidays, and, if I specify December 1869, it is possible that one or two of my readers will understand the allusion. How will this do for a fine December day in that true Garden of England, the New Forest?

"Frost had silvered all things below. Above, motionless under the blue heavens, as if still frozen by the icy fingers of a

December night, were some aërial transparencies of aqueous vapour, amethystine in colour, with edges of white foam. In the East, obscured but not concealed by grey mist, hung the crimson sun. From it faint rays shot forth, touching the clouds beneath, which roused, so to speak, out of sleep, drifted lethargically in a southerly direction:

> 'Underneath the young grey dawn
> A multitude of dense, white, fleecy clouds
> Were wandering in thick flocks across the sky,
> Shepherded by the slow unwilling wind.'

"From the lawns encompassing the house, the eye strayed into a glade of bracken, gold gleaming through silver—a glade shadowed by noble oaks and beeches, with one birch-tree in the middle of it, surpassingly graceful. Upon this each delicate bough and spray was outlined sharply against the sky. Beyond the glade stretched the moor, rugged, bleak, and treeless, sloping sharply upward. Beyond the moor lay the Forest—belts of firs darkly purple; and, flanking these, the irregular masses of oaks and beeches, varying in tint

from palest lavender to rose and brown, some still in shadow, some in ever-increasing glow of sunlight; not one the same, and each in itself containing a thousand differing forms, yet all harmonious parts of the resplendent whole."

The details of the imagery belong indeed to Hampshire, but I think I have seen something like it in Woburn Park, and in the great tracts of sandy fir-wood which obliterate the border-line between Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

The mention of the Christmas Holidays reminds one that the characteristic feature of December is the incursion of the Schoolboy.

> "O running stream of sparkling joy,
> To be a soaring human boy!"

exclaimed the admirable Chadband in a rare moment of poetical inspiration. And never is the Human Boy more "sparkling" and more "soaring"; never does he better deserve the title which Mr. Gladstone used in his controversy with Colonel Dopping—"in the strictest sense a boy"—than when he returns

to us for the Christmas Holidays, having just come out thirtieth in a Form of thirty-five; offensively proud of having played Football for his House, and looking forward to six weeks of such field-sports as his age and circumstances may put within his reach. It is not given to every schoolboy to figure, as my friend Colonel Anstruther figured, in the "Waterloo Run" with the Pytchley in 1866.[1] More often our experiences accord with those of George Cheek in the celebrated "Frosty Day Hunt" with Sir Henry Scattercash's Hounds, as recorded in "Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour." But a gun and a terrier and a ferret are generally attainable in a rural home; and, as long as a boy can kill something, he is mostly happy. If, in addition to this delicate delight, he can smoke without being sick, he feels all the joys of incipient manhood.

Few people outside the ranks of the scholastic profession have had a wider acquaintance than I with that curious being, the Human Boy. To say that one likes schoolboys, would be as

[1] See p. 45.

ridiculous as to say that one likes grown-up people. They are infinitely various; some delightful, some odious, and all alike inscrutable and baffling. It has been truly said that nothing written about schoolboys can be unnatural, because no one can tell what they will say or do in any given contingency.

> "One boy goes galloping over the moorland,
> Wild with delight at the sunshine and speed,
> Blithe as a bird on his bleak bright foreland,
> Glad as the wind, or his own glad steed."

That boy, imaged by Mr. Swinburne, I could like; but what about the boy — Matthew Arnold vouched for his existence—who wrote the following letter?

"My dear Parents,—The anticipation of our Christmas Vacation abounds in peculiar delights. Not only that its 'festivities,' its social gatherings, and its lively amusements crown the Old Year with happiness and mirth, but that I come a guest commended to your hospitable love by the performance of all you bade me remember when I left you in the glad season of sun and flowers.

"And time has sped fleetly since reluctant my departing step crossed the threshold of that home whose indulgences and endearments their temporary loss has taught me to value more and more. Yet that restraint is salutary, and that self-denial is as easily learnt as it is laudable, the propriety of my conduct and the readiness of my services shall ere long aptly illustrate. It is with confidence I promise that the close of every year shall find me advancing in your regard by constantly observing the precepts of my excellent tutor and the example of my beloved parents.

"We break up on Thursday the 11th of December instant, and my impatience of the short delay will assure my dear parents of the filial sentiments of,—Theirs very sincerely,

"N——

"*P.S.*—We shall reassemble on the 19th of January. Mr. and Mrs. P. present their respectful compliments."

No—I should not have liked "N."—and I shrewdly suspect that another boy of the same

type was Connop Thirlwall (afterwards Bishop of St. David's), who published a book of sermons before he went to school; and possibly Charles Vaughan (afterwards Master of the Temple), who, when asked to suggest a treat for his seventh birthday, begged that his father would teach him the Greek Alphabet. To these might be added an accomplished Squire of Berkshire who, in early youth, hearing his father's guests discussing the Eternity of Punishment and the difficulty of believing it, suddenly interjected this unlooked-for contribution to the orthodox side—"How am I to know that it's not Hell already, and that I'm not in it?"—and (from the page of fiction), Kenelm Chillingly, who asked his mother if she never was overpowered by a sense of her own identity; and Dibbins in "Basil the Schoolboy," who, when discussing with a friend the best way to spend a holiday, said, "Let us go to Dingley Dell" (not, I trow, the Dingley Dell where Mr. Wardle dwelt) "and talk about Byron."

And then again there are solemn boys, like

Lord Mahon (afterwards the historian Lord Stanhope), who, when he was asked by a kindly hostess if he would like to go out shortly, replied, "I thank you for the offer, but I take no interest in rural sports"; and the infant Tom Macaulay, who, when Lady Waldegrave sympathized with his scalded legs, said, "Thank you, Madam, the agony is abated"; and (in a slightly different vein) the late Mr. H—— F——, who, when staying in his Eton holidays at Woburn Abbey, and gazing from the windows of the saloon on the "Bason Pond," casually observed to his host,[1] "After all, Duke, your weak point here is your water."

But, though priggish boys and sentimental boys and solemn boys are not attractive, I think I dislike them less than the inordinately manly and plucky boys—like Tom Brown, whom even his creator's genius could never make me tolerate; or his exact counterpart in a slightly lower sphere, Tom Tulliver—who was the kind of boy who is commonly spoken of as being "very fond of animals—that is,

[1] John, sixth Duke of Bedford (1766–1839).

of throwing stones at them." In a similar vein, a cousin of my own, who hearing his big brothers at a Public School describe their experiences as fags and fag-masters, exclaimed with emotion, "If ever I have a fag, I shall stick pins into him."

Mr. Anstey Guthrie, whose power of describing a disagreeable sort of boy, is not surpassed by the author of "Stalky and Co," gives this vivid page from the conversation of a Private School, discussing the amusements of the Christmas holidays.

"'I say,' said one boy, 'did you go to Drury Lane? Wasn't it stunning? That goose, you know, and the lion in the forest, and all the wooden animals lumbering in out of the toy Noah's Ark.'

"'Why couldn't you come to our party on Twelfth Night?' asked another. 'We had great larks. I wish you'd been there!'

"'I had to go to young Skidmore's instead,' said a pale, spiteful-looking boy, with fair hair carefully parted in the middle. 'It was like his cheek to ask me, but I

thought I'd go, you know, just to see what it was like.'

"'What was it like?' asked one or two near him, languidly.

"'Oh, awfully slow! They've a pokey little house in Brompton somewhere, and there was no dancing, only boshy games and a conjuror, without any presents. And, oh, I say! at supper there was a big cake on the table, and no one was allowed to cut it, because it was hired. They're so poor, you know. Skidmore's pater is only a clerk, and you should see his sisters!'

"'Why? Are they pretty?'

"'Pretty! they're just like young Skidmore — only uglier; and just fancy! his mother asked me if I was Skidmore's favourite companion, and if he helped me in my studies!'

"There was a slight laugh at the enormity of Mrs. Skidmore's presumption; and the unfortunate Skidmore, when he returned, soon found reason to regret his rash hospitality, for he never heard the last of the cake (which

had, as it happened, been paid for in the usual manner)."

George Eliot had, *quod minime reris*, a curiously exact knowledge of boyhood, and must, I think, have suffered a good deal from boys in the old days at Griff House and Coleshill. Profoundly true is the following observation: "A boy's sheepishness is by no means a sign of overmastering reverence; and, while you are making encouraging advances to him under the idea that he is overwhelmed by a sense of your age and wisdom, ten to one he is thinking you extremely queer. The only consolation I can suggest to you is, that the Greek boys probably thought the same of Aristotle. It is only when you have mastered a restive horse, or thrashed a drayman, or have got a gun in your hand, that these shy juniors feel you to be a truly admirable and enviable character."

The loving and lovable Lamb departed, for once, from his characteristic amenity when he wrote: "Boys are capital fellows in their own way, among their mates; but they are

unwholesome companions for grown people. The restraint is felt no less on the one side than on the other." I do not agree. I hold that boys can be delightful companions; but then you must *choose your boy*. John Verney and Harry Desmond from "The Hill," and George Arthur from "Tom Brown," and Mark Samphire from "Brothers," and Roland and Eddy Evans from "Stretton," and Meath and Pevensey from "About some Fellows," are all of them characters whom I should have liked to know. I believe that we should have got on together capitally; and at this moment I know plenty of boys in various Public Schools, who seem to feel no "restraint" when they converse with me.

I was once a countryman. I am now a Londoner of Londoners. What has one gained or lost by the exchange? In London we eat too much and take too little exercise, and we live in a rather sunless clime. So far we are losers by leaving the country. But, on the other hand, Dulness, the avenging

angel of rural life, never flaps his wings over London; and a Londoner, when his day's work is over, is not compelled to face the "long, calm evenings" which, when Pen gushed about them, so rightly disgusted George Warrington.

These considerations are never more present to my mind than during the Christmas season. Of that season I am a profound devotee, following in this respect the much-ridiculed tradition of Charles Dickens. And I submit that Christmas can be far more genuinely enjoyed in London than in the country.

Here, if one's disposition prompts, one can hear the finest musical service in Europe, and can listen to some of the best preachers. As regards the more material part of enjoyment, Sir Henry Thompson has told us with authority that all the best eatables in the world find their way into the London market, and yet no one tempts one to eat them in excess. The evenings are cheerful enough, without being obstreperous; and the social festivities

in which one may choose to join are voluntary acts, and not exercises prescribed by domestic discipline.

Christmas in the country, unless my memory deceives me, was a much less enjoyable affair. There was the tramp across a damp park to an imperfectly-ordered service in a cold church, with a faint odour of long-descended ancestry forcing its way up through the floor of the family pew. There was eating on the largest scale, and of the most revengeful food. There was the boisterous merriment of a company of cousins, who recalled Lord Beaconsfield's sardonic saying that "an affectation of gaiety may often be detected in the young." There was, in brief, a combination of distresses which might justify the childish petition, "Forgive us our Christmases, as we forgive them that Christmas against us."

But I must not part with December in this flippant strain. New Year's Eve, at any rate,

is a date which, as I said in my opening chapter, no one in his heart of hearts can disregard. He may do his utmost to stifle or conceal his emotion; but Nature is too strong to be coerced, and, though we may refuse to utter, we cannot choose but feel. Wiser, I think, than those who attempt or affect an impossible stoicism, are those frankly human characters who, from time to time, have entered in their private diaries (made public by posterity) the thoughts which the fateful stroke of twelve on New Year's Eve has awakened in their minds. At such moments, as in times of illness, danger, and sorrow, the true inwardness of a man's nature reveals itself with a curious frankness.

Let us take the Worldlings first; and the most perfect specimen of the Worldling known to us is Samuel Pepys.

On the 31st of December, 1663, Pepys records the worthy resolution which the retrospect of the closing year had suggested to his

soul. I feel sure that my friends Lord Welby and Sir George Murray would pronounce it eminently worthy of that Civil Service of which they (and he) are ornaments.

"Myself, blessed be God! in a good way, and design and resolution of sticking to my business to get a little money, doing the best service I can to the King also; which God continue! So ends the old year."

We all make good resolutions for the New Year, but unfortunately we do not all stick to them. In this respect Pepys sets us an excellent example; for on the last evening of 1665 he was able to write as follows:—

"Thus ends this year, to my great joy, in this manner. I have raised my estate from 1300*l.* to 4400*l.* I have got myself greater interest by my diligence, and my imployments encreased. My whole family hath been well all this time, and all my friends I know of, saving my Aunt Bell, who is dead, and some children of my Cousin Sarah's, of the plague. To our great joy, the town fills apace, and

shops begin to be open again. Pray God continue the plague's decrease!"

Next New Year's Eve the tone is less complacent:—

"*Dec.* 31, 1666.—To my great discontent do find that my gettings this year have been 573*l.* less than my last; and then again my spendings this year have exceeded my spendings the last by 644*l.* Thus ends this year of publick disorder and mischief to the nation. One thing I do reckon remarkable in my own condition is, that I come to abound in good plate, so as at all entertainments to be served wholly with silver plates, having two dozen and a half."

Of those and similar meditations of the admirable Pepys it was impossible not to be reminded when one read the diaries, in a later age, of J. T. Delane.

"*Dec.* 31, 1861.—Dined with my dear mother, brothers, and sister very pleasantly and with much mutual affection, which may God increase! I was hard at work when the year

ended, a year of average happiness and prosperity—both much above my deserts."

"*Dec.* 31, 1863.—A merry Round Game at night, in the midst of which the Old Year ended—a year again in which I have very much to be thankful for, a year of hard work, but fair health and little trouble, a year of hope, increased favour and reputation. May the New Year use me as well."

"*Dec.* 31, 1866.—Thus ends another year. I was in Printing House Square alone when the clock struck twelve. For almost all the world it has been a bad year—bad health, great losses, great calamities, and almost uninterrupted bad weather. But none of these evils, thank God! except the last, has reached me, and I have passed a year in great happiness and average prosperity with unbroken health. I believe I never was in greater favour with all whose esteem I value."

So much for the Worldlings. Now for the Saints; and first that finest of fine

gentlemen, and most devout of Christians, John Evelyn.

"*Dec.* 31, 1656.—I begged God's blessings and mercys for His goodness to me the past yeare, and set my domestic affairs in order."

"*Dec.* 31, 1668.—I entertained my kind neighbours according to custom, giving Almighty God thanks for His gracious mercy to me the past yeare."

"*Dec.* 31, 1685.—Recollecting the passage of the yeare past, and made up accompts, humbly besought the Almighty God to pardon those my Sinns which had provoked Him to discompose my sorrowfull family, and that He would accept of our humiliation, and in His good time restore comfort to it."

One of the most interesting biographies in the English language is "The Life and Letters of Bishop Wiberforce," and the most interesting pages in it are those which are copied from his private diaries. 1845 was a marked year in the Bishop's life. He had been

for six months Dean of Westminster; and then came the offer of the See of Oxford—a "tide" in his affairs, which "taken at the flood" led on to the fortune of the English Church. He writes thus on 31st December, 1845:—

"So ends this year—a year greatly marked by God's mercies, if I be faithful in the state to which I am raised. Endeavoured to draw my family in chapel to praise and thanksgiving. O THOU Who hast been so gracious unto us, bless me and mine in the new residence. A windy, stormy, violent night;—so my diocese all dark and cloudy, but ONE directs. ONE is over all. To Him I dare to say, my Father, keep us."

I turn to another ecclesiastical biography, and note the words in which Bishop Tait, just appointed to the See of Canterbury, took leave of the old diocese and the Old Year:—

"*Dec.* 31, 1868.—I have seen the sun of 1868 go down over the Thames, as I have watched the last sun of many years back.

. . . O Lord, the year will close in a few minutes. We shall hear the bells from many spires announcing its death. Raise us to hopes of a bright immortality with Thee."

And now we are in a region where levity must not intrude, and a simply grave conclusion is, I hope, not out of place. I can find no more congenial company in which to spend New Year's Eve than that of Bishop Wilberforce, who, on the last night of the last year which he lived to complete, wrote thus in his diary:—

"*Dec.* 31, 1872.—So run out the sands of another year. God be praised! God have mercy!"[1]

[1] "Life of Bishop Wilberforce," iii. p. 405.

Orphan hours, the year is dead,
Come and sigh, come and weep!
Merry hours, smile instead,
For the year is but asleep:
See, it smiles as it is sleeping,
Mocking your untimely weeping.

As an earthquake rocks a corse
In its coffin in the clay,
So White Winter, that rough nurse,
Rocks the dead-cold year to-day;
Solemn hours! wail aloud
For your mother in her shroud.

As the wild air stirs and sways
The tree-swung cradle of a child,
So the breath of these rude days
Rocks the year:—be calm and mild,
Trembling hours; she will arise
With new love within her eyes.

January grey is here,
Like a sexton by her grave;
February bears the bier,
March with grief doth howl and rave,
And April weeps—but, O ye hours!
Follow with May's fairest flowers.

—P. B. Shelley.

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